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# Effects of network capital and social support on mental health by race and class

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**EFFECTS OF NETWORK CAPITAL AND SOCIAL SUPPORT ON MENTAL HEALTH BY RACE  
AND CLASS**

**A Dissertation  
Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the  
Louisiana State University and  
Agricultural and Mechanical College  
in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy**

**in**

**The Department of Sociology**

**by**

**Claire Norris  
B.A., Louisiana State University, 2003  
M.A., Louisiana State University, 2005  
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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	ii
ABSTRACT.....	v
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION.....	1
Introduction.....	1
CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE.....	6
Introduction.....	6
Stress and Health.....	6
Conceptualization of Stress, Daily Hassles, Chronic Strains, and Life Events.....	8
Social Distributions of Stress and Health.....	9
Stress-Model in Epidemiology: Vulnerability and Exposure.....	10
Social Class, Stress, and Health.....	12
Race, Stress, and Health.....	13
Social Support and Health.....	14
Social Support and Definitions.....	15
Social Support and Well-being.....	17
CHAPTER 3: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK.....	19
Introduction.....	19
Network Capital.....	19
Network Capital and Instrumental Resources.....	20
Network Capital and Social Support.....	22
Race, Class, and Network Capital.....	23
Social Networks, Social Support, and Health: Previous Findings.....	26
Social Class Differences on Social Relationships and Social Support.....	28
Race, Social Networks and Social Support.....	29
CHAPTER 4: DATA AND METHODS	
Introduction.....	31
Part 1: Sample and Data.....	31
Part II: Measures .....	32
The Structure Element of Network Capital.....	32
The Resource Element of Network Capital.....	33
Social Support.....	34
Mental Health.....	34
Social Groups.....	35
Stressful Life Events.....	37
Personal Characteristics and Control Variables.....	38
Part III: Analyses Procedures.....	38

Descriptive Statistics.....	39
CHAPTER 5: NETWORK CAPITAL.....	46
Introduction.....	46
Part I.....	47
The Structure Element of Network Capital.....	48
Part II.....	57
The Resource Element of Network Capital.....	58
CHAPTER 6: PERCEIVED ADEQUACY OF SOCIAL SUPPORT.....	76
Introduction.....	76
Part I.....	77
Independent Samples T-Test.....	77
Part II.....	79
Perceived Adequacy of Social Support.....	79
Perceived Adequacy of Instrumental Social Support, by Class.....	82
Perceived Adequacy of Expressive Social Support, by Class.....	83
Perceived Adequacy of Social Support, by Race.....	83
CHAPTER 7: STRESS, SUPPORT, AND DISTRESS PROCESS.....	94
Introduction.....	94
Part I.....	96
Stress.....	96
Part II.....	98
Exploring Stress.....	98
Part III.....	104
Distress.....	104
Stress, Support, Distress, and Social Groups.....	106
CHAPTER 8: DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUDING REMARKS.....	113
Introduction.....	113
Key Findings.....	114
Network Capital.....	114
Social Support.....	117
Stress and Distress.....	118
Limitations.....	119
Future Research.....	120
Concluding Remarks.....	122
REFERENCES.....	123
VITA.....	131

## **ABSTRACT**

This study investigates race and class differences in the stress-support-distress process. Incorporating the social support strand of network analysis in the stress-support-distress model allows social support theorists to understand better what network sectors enhance/restrict access to such resources as social support and, in turn, affect such outcomes as mental health. I used data collected in a 2003 study of residents in Orleans Parish, Louisiana, to construct measures used in my analyses. Using independent samples t-test and ordinary least squares regressions, I addressed five general research questions: (1) whether and how there are variations in network capital forms – the structure and resource element of network capital -- by race and class, (2) whether there are race/class differences in perceptions of support adequacy, (3) how network capital affects perceptions of social support adequacy by race and class, (4) how the stress-support-distress process varies by race and class. I find that both race and class differences exist in the stress-support-distress process. My results also suggest there are greater significant differences exist between working/lower-class blacks and whites in the stress-distress-support process. Further, my findings provide evidence that my race- and class-sensitive analyses begins to suggest that race and class differences in network capital is important for understanding the variations in the stress-support-distress process across social strata.

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

### Introduction

Physical and mental health inequalities across social strata are reoccurring concepts in stratification and health disciplines. Health theorists acknowledge the effects that social- and environmental-induced stresses exert on mental and physical health (Avison and Gotlib 1994; McLean and Link 1994). Stress is triggered by an environmental change resulting in adaptation and adjustment (Aneshensel 1992). The deleterious health effects associated with stress are not arbitrarily distributed throughout society, but rather tend to be concentrated in certain groups (i.e., working/lower-class, unmarried, and nonwhites) and, in turn, create differential distributions of mental and physical health outcomes across social groups (i.e., working/lower-class, unmarried, and nonwhites) (see Thoits 1984; 1982; Pearlin 1989). More recently, health theorists maintain that some groups (i.e., women, poor, nonwhites) are more vulnerable to the negative effects of stress on physical and mental health -- even after holding stressful life events constant (Thoits 1982). To address why some groups are more or less vulnerable to stressful life events, theorists propose that inadequate adaptive strategies result in poorer physical and mental health outcomes (Lin, Dean and Ensel 1986; Haines and Hurlbert 1992; McLean and Link 1994). Therefore, researchers question what coping mechanisms buffer the pernicious (i.e., distress) effects of stress on mental health (i.e., distress) during difficult times.

Classic sociological theory sought to understand the role of social relationships on maintaining mental health. Durkheim's (1951) seminal piece on social integration not only set the stage for systematic investigations on how social relationships affect mental health,

but also laid the theoretical groundwork for contemporary social support research (Vaux 1988). From this line of research, Kaplan (1974), Cassel (1974, 1976), and Cobb (1976) were among the first to emphasize the role that social support plays in buffering the deleterious effects of stress on mental health.

In general, social support literature suggests that social support serves as a buffer against the harmful mental and physical health effects of life's stressors. Thus, individuals with stronger social support systems tend to report less depressive symptoms; however, individuals with weaker social support systems tend to report more depressive symptoms (i.e., levels of distress). Although researchers have not reached a consensus on the conceptual definition of social support, network theorists call for researchers to emphasize the "social" dimension of social support as a critical link in understanding the effects of social support (Lin, Ensel, Simeone, Kuo 1979; Haines and Hurlbert 1992; Hurlbert, Haines, and Beggs 2000). Thus for this dissertation, social support is defined as "support accessible to an individual through social ties to other individuals, groups, and the large community" (Lin et al. 1979: 109). From this line of research, acknowledging the "social" dimension of social support can help explain the differential distribution of such a valued resource. In fact, scholars acknowledge that, like most social resources, social support is unevenly distributed across social groups, thus, exacerbating mental and physical health variations across social groups. These mental health (i.e., distress) variations constitute the focus of my dissertation.

Contemporary social support and network theorists have begun to investigate how social networks can differentially impact access to social resources--such as social support -- and, thus, affect such outcomes as mental and physical health (Lin, Ye, and Ensel 1999; House, Umberson, and Landis 1988; Haines and Hurlbert 1992). Simply put, social scientists



recognize that the social relationships in which individuals are embedded can restrict or promote access to social support and, thus, affect health (Haines and Hurlbert 1992; House 1987). Because researchers acknowledge that network structures and network resources – network capital – affect access to social resources (i.e., job information or social support) and economic and noneconomic outcomes (i.e., job promotions and mental health), contemporary social network theorists posit that researchers should shift their attention to the effects of network capital on the stress-distress process (see Hurlbert, Beggs, and Haines 2008).

Theoretical works on network capital posit that understanding what forms of network capital promote access to social resources is essential to understanding stratified economic and noneconomic outcomes (Hurlbert et al. 2008). Applying this argument to social support (a social resource), I assert that bringing network capital theory into the support-distress process will better explain how such resources as social support are unevenly distributed across social groups which, in turn, create mental health disparities across social groups. Thus far, health theorists have primarily asked whether the quantity and quality of social relationships are causally related to health (see House 1987; Kessler and McLeod 1984); however, researchers have failed to examine how the stress-support process differs by social groups, specifically by race and class.

Thus, this dissertation will, first, fill that gap by examining social groups' disparities in network capital and access to social support and thus, mental health. Understanding network capital differences across social groups provides insight into how and/or whether the stress-support-distress process varies across social groups, particularly by race and social class. Second, this dissertation complements the existing body of health literature on how race and

class group differences (a) affect access to social support and, (b) in turn, affect health outcomes.

To analyze race and class-- differences in network capital and, thus, variations in the stress-support-distress process, I use data from a 2003 study of Orleans Parish residents. These data contain information that allows me to construct a wide array of measures of the network structure and network resources dimensions of network capital. These data will, therefore, allow me to address the central questions of this dissertation: (1) whether the network structure and network resources dimensions of network capital vary by race and class; (2) and, if so, whether and how these differences create race and/or class differences in the stress-distress process.

The remainder of this dissertation is organized in the following manner. **Chapter 2** provides the conceptual foundation for addressing these questions by tracing the development of the stress, health, and social support literature. I explore the conceptual developments in the stress-health and social support literature that ground my analyses. I also demonstrate why and how my research fills a crucial gap in that literature.

In **Chapter 3**, I present my theoretical framework – network capital. Network capital consists of two critical dimensions – the structure element of network capital and the resource element of network capital – that work to explain the unequal access to social support and, thus the mental health disparities across race and class. I also present my research expectations.

In **Chapter 4**, I begin by describing the data I use in my analysis, and then present a detailed discussion of the measures I created and the methods I use to analyze them. I also present descriptive statistics for all measures that I use in the analysis.

**Chapter 5** presents empirical results for network capital. *Part I* of the analysis explores the differences in the structure element of network capital by race and class. *Part II* of my analyses examines how the structure element of network capital affects access to the resource element of network capital, by race and class. **Chapter 6** features the empirical results for perceived instrumental and emotional social support. Particularly, this chapter investigates how network capital variations across race and class groups differentially affect access to perceived instrumental and emotional social support.

**Chapter 7** presents the empirical results for network capital and social support on health (i.e., distress). This chapter features differences in the stress-distress process across race and class groups. Finally, **Chapter 8** summarizes the major findings of this study. Limitations and contributions of this study and avenues for future research are discussed.

## CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

### Introduction

This literature review is divided into two major sections. Section one traces the development of the stress-health literature. Specifically, **section one** (a) clarifies the deleterious effects of stress on mental health (i.e., psychological distress) (b) explores the stress-health research on the unequal distribution of stress and health, and (c) highlights two perspectives (i.e., vulnerability and exposure) that emphasize individuals' locations affect differential exposure to stress and, thus, health. **Section two** presents a more recent perspective – social support. Drawing from the social support literature, I (a) conceptualize social support and (b) address how social support serves as a buffering mechanism that works to mitigate the harmful health effects of stressful life events.

### Stress and Health

Research within various disciplines investigates the link between stress and health (Thoits 1982; Haines and Hurlbert 1992; McAdoo 1982; Aneshensel 1992; Lin and Ensel 1991). Most social scientists believe stress to be a common cause of mental and physical illnesses. Stress, a term that originated in physics, is used to index the force acting on the physical and psychological body (Levi 1996). Walter Cannon (1932), a pioneer in stress research, conducted extensive research on the effects of “fight-or-flight” response in animals and humans. He argued that this reaction is adaptive because it allows organisms to respond to threatening or stressful situations. However, when the “fight or flight” reaction is unachievable, the exposure to incessant stress can induce physiological and/or physical damage and illness.

Following the works of Cannon (1932), Hans Selye (1956) laid much of the groundwork for discussion and research on stress over the last few decades. Selye (1956: 7)

defined stress as “the nonspecific response of the body to any demand made upon it.” He noted that, when humans and laboratory animals were exposed to a variety of stressors, they responded in a distinct three-stage pattern, termed the general adaptation syndrome: (1) the alarm reaction, (2) the stage of resistance, and (3) the stage of exhaustion. This three-stage response to stress is common among all living organisms. Although individuals have differential exposure to stressors and experience various types of stressors, Selye believed that, in some respects, there are similar biochemical responses in humans.

Despite the patterned biochemical responses to stressors among humans, stress theorists maintain that the mental and physical reactions to stress vary by social characteristics. That is, some groups (i.e., the poor, women, unmarried, and nonwhites<sup>1</sup>) are more vulnerable to psychological/physical illnesses during stressful situations, despite the initial, patterned, biochemical responses (Pearlin 1989; Kessler 1979; Kessler and Cleary 1980; Dohrenwend and Dohrenwend 1976).

Several models have been formulated to explain the health disparities associated with stressors. Prior to the discussion of the social distributions of stress and health, it is essential that the conceptual foundations be laid. Therefore, the forthcoming sections will be organized as follows: First, a conceptual definition of stressors and the forms of stressors emphasized in the stress/health literature will be provided and second, a brief overview of the stress-distress model formulations that are used to explain the stress-health disparities among social groups will be discussed.

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<sup>1</sup> It is important to note here that nonwhites refer to racial/ethnic minorities in the U.S.

## Conceptualizations of Stress, Daily Hassles, Chronic Strains, and Life Events

Despite the conceptual inconsistencies in definitions of stress, by and large conceptualizations of stressors emphasize that stressors engender some form of change in the individual, whether those changes are biochemical (e.g., increase in adrenaline), behavioral (e.g., crying or sleeping), metabolic (loss/gain of appetite), or emotional (depression or anxiety). Therefore, for this research, stressors will be defined as any environmental, social, or internal demand(s) that signify or imply that the individual should readjust his/her usual activities (Holmes and Rahe 1967). The stress literature has identified three major forms of stressors: life events, daily hassles, and chronic strains. Life events warrant major behavioral readjustments within a relatively short time period (deaths, birth of a child). Daily hassles are “mini-events” that interrupt our daily tasks, causing minor readjustments within a short period of time (e.g., a flat tire, a traffic jam) (Thoits 1995). Chronic strains, however, are those intermittent demands that require that the individual make modifications to their everyday life patterns over prolonged periods of time (e.g., injury, family problems, financial difficulties) (Thoits 1995; Pearlin 1989; Avison and Turner 1988). Findings suggest that daily hassles, chronic strains, and life events all have a negative impact on mental health<sup>2</sup>.

Rahe and Holmes (1967) were among the first researchers to study life events systemically. They developed an instrument, the Social Readjustment Rating Scale (SRRS) that could easily be utilized in studies of the relationships between major life events and illness. Their research suggested that individuals who were ill tended to have increased exposure to life events. This seminal work fueled the stress-health research. The main theme that has emerged out of the stress literature is that the greater the exposure to life events in a

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<sup>2</sup> It should be noted that much of the psychosocial literature focuses stress and mental health, rather than physical health. Therefore, this dissertation will primarily focus on how stress is associated with mental health.

given period of time, the greater the chances an individual will demonstrate psychological disturbances.

Life events are only a snapshot of the universal collective stressors (Aneshensel 1992); however, daily hassles and chronic strains have been given less attention than life events in the stress literature -- despite critics' calls to examine the impact(s) that daily hassles and chronic strains can have on mental health (Thoits 1995; Liem and Liem 1978; House, Kessler, and Herzog 1990; Pearlin, Menaghan, Lieberman, and Mullan 1981; Avison and Turner 1988). For example, Liem and Liem (1978) expressed the need to address the persistent or recurrent stressors, such as lengthy unemployment, among the working class. Also, in an attempt to disaggregate the effects of chronic stressors and life events, Avison and Turner (1988) argued that "... chronic strains provoke more distress because they represent unresolved, continuing difficulties for the individual" whereas "... the effects of discrete events dissipate fairly rapidly over time" (261). Regardless of the type of stressor(s), research suggests that individuals exposed to stressors have a greater probability of exhibiting psychological illness (i.e., depression). To better understand the social group differences in stress and health, it is important to briefly review the existing literature on the relationship between the social structure and health.

### Social Distributions of Stress and Health

Leonard Pearlin (1989) called for stress and health theorists to draw stress research closer to the field of sociology. To do this, he suggested that theorists acknowledge that individuals' positions in the social system are not extraneous to the stress process, but rather the social structure has an influence on our stressful experiences and, in turn health:

Many stressful experiences . . . don't spring out of a vacuum but typically can be traced back to surrounding social structures and people's locations within them. The most

encompassing of these structures are the various systems of stratification that cut across societies, such as those based on social and economic class, race and ethnicity, gender and age. To the extent that these systems embody the unequal distributions of resources, opportunities, and self-regard, a low status within them may itself be a source of stressful life conditions ( Pearlin 242).

A number of contemporary sociologists respond to this call by studying stress within the context of exposure, vulnerability, the mediators that individuals are able to mobilize, and the differential health outcomes caused by stress (see Dohrenwend 1969; Kessler and Neighbors 1986; Kaplan 1974, 1977; Cassel 1974; Thoits 1982; Vaux 1988). From this line of research, stratification and health theorists recognize that stress and psychological disorder are not randomly distributed throughout society, but rather tend to be concentrated in certain social groups (Vaux 1988). In other words, certain groups (i.e., women, nonwhites, and working/lower-class individuals) have increased probabilities of experiencing psychological disturbances (i.e., distress) from stressors, compared to their higher-status counterparts (i.e., men, whites, and upper-class individuals). Stress theorists formulated several models to explain social group variations in how stress differentially affects health across social groups (Kessler 1979; Vaux 1988; Thoits 1982, 1984). The two most popular perspectives highlight two basic processes: exposure and vulnerability (Dohrenwend 1973; Kessler and Cleary 1980; Brown and Harris 1989; Brown 2003; Turner, Wheaton and Lloyd 1995; Kessler 1979).

#### Stress-Model in Epidemiology: Vulnerability and Exposure

The *exposure hypothesis* suggests that some groups (i.e., minorities, women, and individuals of working/lower-class status) have higher exposure to stressors than their higher-status counterparts (i.e., whites, men, middle-and upper class status individuals). For example, Brown and Harris (1989) found that working-class women had a higher probability of exposure to chronic difficulties than their middle-class counterparts; further, persistent



chronic difficulties were associated with increased levels of depression. Although research has shown that increased exposure is linked to increased levels of psychological disturbances, exposure alone does not explain the relationship between social status and psychological symptoms (Thoits 1982, 1984). Therefore, researchers investigate whether some groups more vulnerable or experience elevated psychological distress compared to other groups (Pearlin 1975, Thoits 1982, Aneshensel 1992; Dohrenwend ,1969 Pearlman 1989).

The *vulnerability perspective* begins with the assumption that life events (i.e., exposure) cannot account for social group differences in psychological distress. In fact, Kessler (1979) found that higher levels of distress among lower-status individuals (i.e., unmarried, women, and racial minorities) were accounted for by higher vulnerability among these groups, not by a higher exposure to stressful life events. Thus, this perspective suggests that some social groups react more strongly to stress, generating greater increases in depressive symptoms (i.e., distress) (George and Lynch 2003; Kessler and Essex 1982; Dohrenwend and Dohrenwend 1976; Kessler and Cleary 1980; Thoits 1982, 1984, 1987; Turner and Noh 1983). Thoits (1984) expanded the vulnerability perspective by suggesting that vulnerability is indirectly affected by a broader class of coping resources (i.e., mastery, social support, financial resources). Thus, for certain groups, perceptions of stressful encounters might be more harmful or threatening because they possess limited or inadequate coping resources.

Researchers have applied both perspectives – exposure and vulnerability – to understand the relationship between stress and health among race and class groups. The subsequent paragraphs will briefly examine the stratified outcomes of stress and health among race and class groups.

## Social Class, Stress, and Health

The stress-health literature documents that psychological distress is inversely associated with social class<sup>3</sup>. That is, individuals of working/lower-class status tend to experience higher levels of psychological disturbance (Neugebauer, Dohrenwend and Dohrenwend 1976). The Epidemiologic Catchment Area (ECA) study, the largest study of psychiatric disorders conducted in the United States, found that low SES predicted elevated rates of a broad range of psychiatric conditions. Drawing from the aforementioned competing perspectives, social scientists argue that health disparities across social classes are associated with both frequency of stressful life events and stress responses.

Supporters of the exposure perspective maintain that working/lower-class individuals' higher incidences of mental illnesses might owe to greater amounts of exposure to stressful life events. However, supporters for the vulnerability argument maintain that that the exposure argument is weak on two bases. First, some ethnographic research demonstrates that working/lower-class individuals are not more likely to disproportionately experience stressful events compared to their affluent counterparts (Thoits 1982; Kessler 1979). Second, controls for exposure to stressful events do not attenuate the effects of psychological disturbances among working/lower-class individuals (Kessler 1979; Kessler and Cleary 1980).

Thus, social causation theorists maintain that the exposure perspective is incapable of explaining social variations in health and stress. Instead, they assert that, holding stressful life events constant, individuals of working/lower-class statuses are more susceptible or

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<sup>3</sup> Although social class and socioeconomic status are often used interchangeably in the social science literature, this dissertation will treat social class as the preferred term, unless otherwise specified in research theories.

vulnerable to the pernicious effects of life's stressors. That is, because of their marginal position in the marketplace, they lack the personal and social resources needed to assist them in adapting to stressful life events, thus making them more vulnerable to the deleterious health effects associated with stress (Thoits 1987).

### Race, Stress, and Health

Similar to class, race is a major basis of concern in stratification and health literature (Neighbors 1987; Kessler and Neighbors 1986; Brown 2003; Williams and Collins 1995). Applying the exposure argument to race, theorists argue ethnic and racial groups disproportionately experience higher rates of depressive symptoms because they are disproportionately of lower socioeconomic status than their white counterparts. In fact, the majority of the stress/health literature finds that higher levels of distress among blacks disappear when social class is controlled (Warheit, Holzer and Schwab 1973; Neff 1985; Eaton and Kessler 1981; Carr and Krause 1978). These findings suggest that "race is not an independent determinant of psychological distress, but rather serves as a proxy for socioeconomic position" (Kessler and Neighbors 107: 1986). Thus, because the effects of race disappear after class is controlled for, supporters of the vulnerability perspective maintain that lack of resources within the poor black community affects their response to stressors.

Thoits (1982; 1984) expanded the vulnerability perspective by suggesting that having access to social resources, a coping resource, can serve as a buffer against the negative mental health effects of life's stressors (Thoits 1982; 1984). Although multiple aspects of social resources directly and indirectly affect health outcomes, this research will primarily focus on social support, as a social resource, to help explain the stress-distress process.

## Social Support and Health

Early classic theory sought to understand mental health by exploring, such concepts as “social integration” and “alienation”. Durkheim’s influential piece inspired psychologists, epidemiologists, and sociologists to understand the role of social embeddness on maintaining mental health. Psychological development theories emphasize the importance of social relationships in childhood development. These theories explore how infants’ attachment to their caregiver, usually the mother, is instrumental in the early development of stability and confidence (Vaux 1988). Freudian theory, further, asserts that mental health problems are rooted in the lack of stable relationships in early childhood. Although psychological development theories mostly emphasize the importance of social relationships in early mental health development, epidemiologists highlight the importance of maintaining social relationships (beyond childhood development) on mental health (Vaux 1988; Lin 2000; Haines and Hurlbert 1992).

Moving from psychological development, social exchange theorists view social relationships in “terms of their more immediate and surface benefits” (Vaux 1988). This perspective highlights the “cost” and “benefits” of social relationships, throughout an individual’s lifetime. That is, individuals engage constantly in social relationships that can offer intangible (i.e., love support, guidance) and tangible (i.e., money, goods, transportation) resources (Lin 2000). The social exchange and psychological theoretical work on mental health and well-being not only set the stage for social epidemiology, but also laid the theoretical groundwork for contemporary social support research (Vaux 1988).

Kaplan (1974), Cassel (1974, 1976), and Cobb (1976) were among the first to emphasize the role that social support plays on mental health. In general, the social support

literature suggests that social support acts as a buffer against the pernicious mental and physical effects of life's stressors. The subsequent paragraphs will conceptualize social support and discuss social support as a buffer mechanism against life's stressors.

### Social Support and Definitions

Although most researchers agree that social support is a multidimensional concept, social support researchers are divided on exactly what elements (i.e., the type, source, and subjective objective appraisal of support) constitute the dimensions of social support. A central part of this controversy is how to conceptualize the type of social support. Researchers have reported various conceptual measurements for types of social support. For example, Cassel (1974, 1976) and Kaplan (1974) proposed a simplistic measure of social support; they believed that social feedback was a critical element in defining social support. Cobb (1976), however, engaged in more serious efforts to measure types of social support; he proposed that social support should be regarded as information that led the individual to believe that he/she is loved, valued and esteemed, and belongs to a network of communication and mutual obligation. Thus, the types of social support derived by Cobb (1976) consist of: (1) emotional support, (2) esteem support, and (3) a sense of belonging. Kaplan (1977) suggested that the functional dimensions of social support include all basic social needs. The basic social needs include affection, esteem or approval, belonging, identity, and security. Cobb's and Kaplan's definitions are restricted to emotional support. More recently, researchers have incorporated instrumental support and information into their conceptual definitions of social support. For example, House (1987) argued that social support consists of four broad classes, which include emotional support, instrumental support, informational support, and appraisal support (i.e., offering validation)

Based on Kaplan's (1974) conceptual definition of social support, Thoits (1982) argued that social support should be defined by the "degree to which a person's basic social needs are gratified through interaction with others" (147). After a comprehensive review of the literature, Thoits (1982) suggested that instrumental (i.e., providing tangible aid help with work or family duties) and emotional support (i.e., providing intangible aid such as affection, advice, and esteem) meet all the basic social needs and subsume all other types of support. Therefore, the focus of this dissertation will be on instrumental (or tangible aid) and emotional support (or intangible support) as types of support.

Another aspect of social support that has undergone much scholarly discourse is whether support should be measured as perceived or received support. The perceived versus received support argument addresses "... the subjective versus objective continuum" (Lin et al. 1999: 346). Perceived support is an individual's perception of support availability during routine and non-routine situations. In contrast, received support is actual transactions of support during routine and non-routine situations. Substantial evidence suggests that the two dimensions are not correlated and demonstrate dissimilar patterns of association to stress. However, studies continuously demonstrate that perceived support is more effective in buffering the effects of stressful life events. Wethington and Kessler (1986: 85) argued "not only that perceptions of support availability are more important than actual support transactions but that the latter promote psychological adjustment through the former, as much as by practical resolutions of situational demands". Therefore, this research project will only examine perceived support.

The final dimension of support is the sources of support. The sources of support are summarized as formal support, or support provided by most social service agencies, such as

FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency or American Red Cross) or informal support, which is “unstructured assistance from one’s interpersonal relationships” (Bailey, Wolfe, and Wolfe 1996: 289). Examples of informal support include spouse/lover, family friends, neighbors, relatives and coworkers. In addition to conceptual inconsistencies, a second issue plagues the literature – social support as a buffering mechanism.

### Social Support and Well-being

In shaping and developing the social support concept, social support research starts with the premise that “an individual’s state of mental health undergoes deterioration when a life event perceived to be important is experienced” (Lin, Woelfel and Light 1985). Furthermore, social support theorists maintain that social support can serve as a “buffer” to the adverse psychological or somatic effects of stressful life events. These works were influential in promotion of the stress-buffer model. According to this line of work, buffering effects are most effective when there are strong stressors present (House, Umberson, and Landis 1988). Although substantial evidence supports the positive effects social support has on mental well-being and psychological distress, Vaux (1988: 158) concluded that “relatively little is known about how it [that is, social support] varies across subgroups of the population.” To understand this unequal distributions of social support, network theorists sought to highlight the “social” component of social support by defining social support as “support accessible to an individual through social ties to other individuals, groups and the larger community” (Lin et al. 1979: 109). Drawing from this perspective, social support theorists are able to understand better the relationship between the social structure and access to social support.

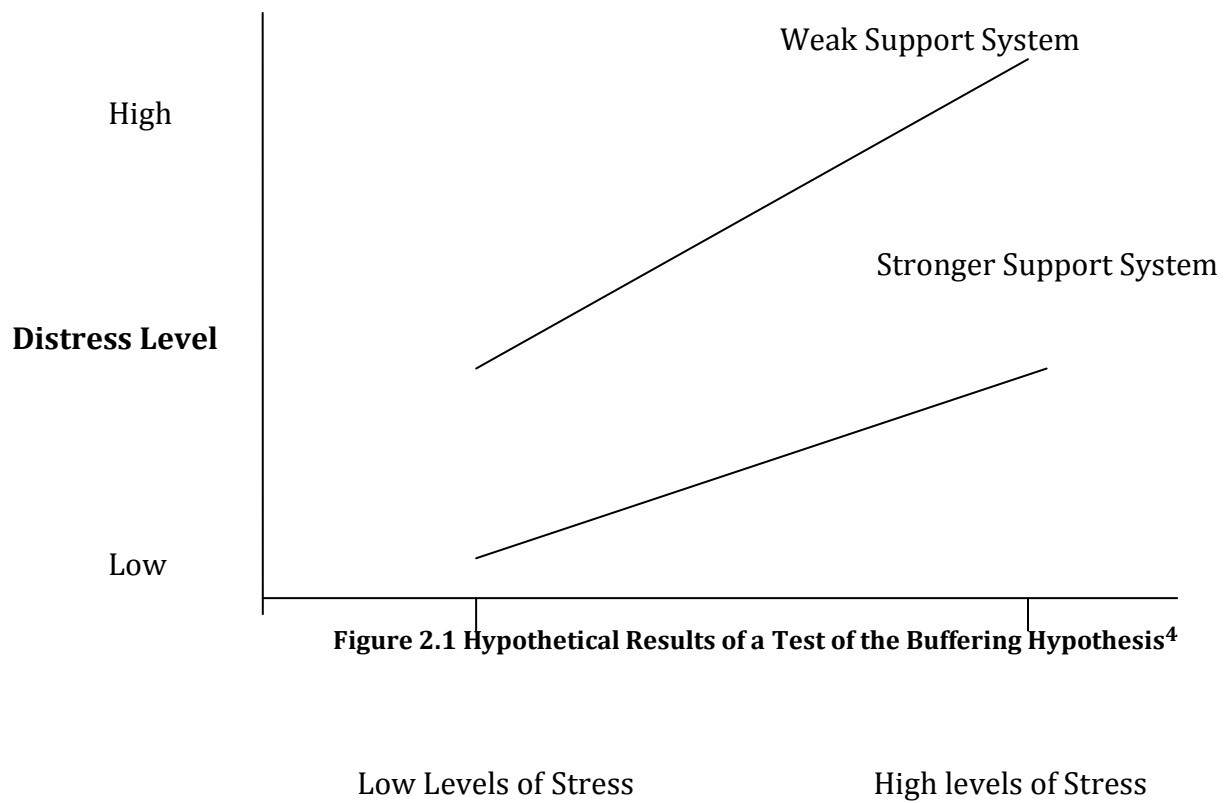


Figure 2.1 Hypothetical Results of a Test of the Buffering Hypothesis<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Figure is a replica from Thoits' (1982: 149) study.



## CHAPTER 3: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### Introduction

Contemporary work in social support research traces to James House (1987: 137), who was the first to emphasize “the role of social structures in understanding the nature, sources and generally the positive effects of social relationships and social support.” Since then, sociologists have shifted “. . . from the sociologies that decontextualize the individual” to emphasizing the components of the social structure that constrain or enable access to social support (Beggs, Haines, and Hurlbert 1996: 202). Social support theorists responded to that shift by developing the social support strand of network analysis. Incorporating the social support strand of network analysis in the stress-distress model allows social support theorists to understand better what network sectors enhance/restrict access to such resources as social support and, in turn, affect such outcomes as physical and mental health (Haines and Hurlbert 1992; Hurlbert et al. 2008; Beggs et al. 1996; Marsden 1987).

### Network Capital

The theoretical underpinnings of network capital are rooted in social capital theory. Pierre Bourdieu (1983) was among the first to conduct a systematic analysis of social capital. He conceptualized social capital as the “actual or potential resources [that] are linked [to] . . . institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance or recognition” (248). As scholars began to embrace the concept of social capital, it underwent a range of diverse applications that refer to the social structure ((e.g., information and control advantages (Burt 1992), community norms (Coleman 1988), and community participation (Putnam 1995)). Portes (1998) (based on Bourdieu’s conceptualization of social capital) highlighted two elements of social capital that are key to the social support strand of network analysis: the first element

refers to “the social relationship itself that allows individuals to claim access to resources possessed by their associates” and the second is” the amount and quality of those resources” (1998: 3). Hurlbert et al. (2008) see these two components – the social relationship (the structure element) and the quality and quantity of resources (the resource element) – as network capital.

Hurlbert et al. (2008) also suggest that examining the variations in network capital (the structure and resource elements) is an essential step to understanding the stress-distress process. Simply put, variations in the structure/resources<sup>5</sup> dimensions of network capital can affect access to social resources and, in turn, such outcomes as physical and mental health (Hurlbert et al. 2008; Granovetter 1973, 1974; Wilson 1992; Lin 2000). Applying this argument to social support, I will argue that it is essential to explore what forms of network capital promote access to this vital resource.

### Network Capital and Instrumental Resources

Network theorists have established that certain network sectors promote access to certain kinds of network resources. Granovetter’s (1973)”strength of weak ties” argument laid the conceptual groundwork for network theorists to explore “how behavior is shaped and constrained by one’s network . . . [and how] . . . individuals can manipulate their network to achieve specific goals” (1370). He (1973: 1361) defined strength of ties as the “. . . combination of the amount of time, the emotional intensity, the intimacy and the reciprocal services which characterize the tie.” Granovetter (1974) convincingly argued that weak ties act as conduits through which ideas, influences, or information can be transmitted. Thus, weak ties are instrumental in collecting non-redundant information from more distant parts

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<sup>5</sup> Network resources are measures of the contact’s status and privilege (i.e., homeownership, education, etc)

of the social structure. Granovetter's study (1973) also linked the utility of weak ties to network structure by emphasizing that weak ties are likely to be found in wide-ranging networks (the extent to which the members of ego's network (alters) are not connected to one another). Lin et al. (1981) extended Granovetter's tie strength argument by using the term "social resources" not to refer only to the characteristics of the tie, but how the contact's status can attribute/restrict access to resources. Thus, the "wealth, status, and power, as well as the social ties [i.e., weak or strong ties], of these persons who are directly or indirectly linked to the individual and who, therefore comprise his social network, are considered potential social resources for the individual (Lin et al. 1981: 1165).

Furthermore, individual's attempting to achieve instrumental action (or action taken to achieve a goal) might benefit from the resources associated with their contact. Granovetter (1973, 1974) convincingly argued that weak ties serve as conduits for important information to flow. Taken together, the strength of weak tie argument and the social resources argument suggest that, because weak ties are "bridges" for diverse and non-redundant information to flow, success in instrumental action (Lin et al. 1981; Marsden and Hurlbert 1988) is enhanced by access to weak ties. Furthermore, wide-ranging networks (or networks that have little interconnection among the individual's network members), in which weak ties are likely to be found, are also advantageous for instrumental actions (i.e., job-finding). "It follows, then, that individuals with few weak ties will be deprived of [new] information from distant parts of the social system" (Granovetter 1973), and less likely to evoke instrumental action and, thus, restricted access to instrumental resources, such as job-finding resources.

## Network Capital and Social Support

Social support theorists highlighted the structure element of network capital in social support transfers and mental health by emphasizing that “mental health represents the psychological and emotional status of a person, and its promotion and maintenance requires expressive action” (Lin 1986: 28). Social resources theory suggests that the primary purpose of expressive action (or actions undertaken for the action itself) is to maintain rather than gain personal resources (Lin 1986). This purpose is best achieved by interaction with individuals who share similar characteristics (i.e., homophilous ties). If this argument and the homophily principle are true, then successful expressive actions are best achieved by the use of strong ties, rather than weak ties. Social resources theorists have established that core networks are likely to contain strong and homophilous ties. These core network structures are likely to exhibit high density and low diversity.

And because smaller networks tend to be more restricted in range than larger networks, small network structures typically increase access to expressive resources<sup>6</sup>. Thus, smaller, more dense, and less diverse network sectors containing a higher proportion of strong and homophilous ties typically increase access to social support and in turn health. Moving from theoretical underpinnings, the subsequent paragraphs will (1) discuss how race and/ or social class can differentially affect individuals’ network structure (i.e., the structure element of network capital), (2) explore how the structure of their networks can impact the resource element of network capital (i.e., instrumental and latent supportive resources), (3) evaluate the effects of the structure and resource dimensions on a key social resource -- social

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<sup>6</sup> To be clear, smaller network structures typically contain strong and homophilous ties. However, larger network structures can also contain strong and homophilous ties. Thus, a larger network with strong and homophilous ties might offer more supportive resources than a smaller network structure with strong and homophilous ties.

support, (4) and, finally, discuss how mental health outcomes (i.e., psychological distress levels) may be affected by all of these factors.

### Race, Class, and Network Capital

Beginning with race and the structure element of network capital, ethnographers and network theorists suggest that, compared to whites, blacks are embedded in network structures that are more dense, contain less diversity, and that are likely to have higher proportions of strong ties (Martineau 1977; Stack 1974; McAdoo 1982). For example, Martineau (1977) found that blacks in urban areas had higher rates of informal ties to relatives, friends, and neighbors than their white counterparts. Also, Marsden (1987) found that network diversity and size were lower among blacks than among whites. If these network structure arguments are correct, then blacks should have more access to latent supportive resources and less access to instrumental resources than their white counterparts. To clarify these network structure and network resource implications on social resources (e.g., social support) and outcomes (e.g., health), blacks should report higher levels of social support and lower levels of distress, compared to their white counterparts.

However, Wilson's (1992) thesis contends that blacks' network structures have been dramatically altered since the 1970's. Wilson's argument suggests that the structural and economic changes of the 1970's and the Civil Rights Movement created diversity in the socioeconomic situations of blacks. That is, the emergence of a service industry, decline in manufacturing, technological innovations, and the relocation to better-paying jobs into central cities increased rates of poverty and isolated inner-city blacks from middle-class occupations and individuals. Meanwhile, the Civil Rights Movement allowed for the creation of a black middle-class and removed the restrictive covenants that once confined most blacks to the

ghetto. Therefore middle-class blacks escaped the ghetto in large numbers, leaving behind a group that was “truly disadvantaged” in terms of social and economic resources that are necessary for success in modern society.

The exodus of both industrial job opportunities and middle-class families from black inner city areas robbed poor blacks of the form of network capital that is conducive to reducing welfare dependency and unemployment. In other words, the networks of poor blacks were increasingly restricted in social and geographic range (network structure dimension), constraining their access to instrumental resources (network resource dimension). For Wilson, then, the form of network capital the urban poor possess is a result of structural conditions; therefore, understanding the distinctiveness and disadvantage of the poor lies in understanding their form of network capital (Hurlbert et al. 2008).

In his discussion of social isolation, Wilson highlights the restricted range of poor blacks’ social networks (i.e., network structure element) and counters the notion that strong ties serve as a hedge against poverty. In fact, he suggests that their lack of contact with mainstream society and access to resources (i.e., resource element of network capital) reinforces the disadvantage of their social and economic milieu. Wilson (1992) concluded that social isolation is

unique to the social environment of the underclass. Social isolation deprives residents of inner-city neighborhoods not only of resources and conventional role models whose former presence buffered the effects of neighborhood joblessness, but also the kind of cultural learning from mainstream social networks that facilitates social and economic advancement in modern industrial society (1992: 642).

Granovetter’s (1973) argument is consistent with Wilson’s. He expands upon Wilson’s thesis by clarifying the restrictive nature of the poor’s networks. Granovetter highlights the network characteristics that are associated with poverty. He concluded that poor people tend

to be embedded in network structures that consisted mostly of strong ties. Further, these findings suggest that the poor should have greater access to expressive resources and less access to instrumental resources than their affluent counterparts,

this pervasive use of strong ties by the poor and insecure is a response to economic pressures; they believe themselves to be without alternatives, and the adaptive nature of these reciprocity networks is the main theme of the analysts. At the same time, I would suggest that the heavy concentration of social energy in strong ties has the impact of fragmenting communities of the poor into encapsulated networks with poor connections between these units; individuals so encapsulated may then lose some of the advantages associated with the outreach of weak ties. (1973: 213).

Both Wilson's and Granovetter's arguments suggest that the network structures of the poor are more restricted in range than the network structures of their middle-class and upper-class counterparts. They both contend that these restricted network structures constrain access to instrumental resources (i.e., job opportunities). Their arguments clearly suggest the poor's network structures constrain access to instrumental resources and, thus, affect access to job information and such outcomes as employment. However, the consequences of the poor's network structures and network resources on perceived adequacy of social support and, thus, distress remains largely unexplored, despite the fact that sociological theories predict socioeconomic differences in the stress-distress model. Exploring race and social class differences in network capital and whether these differences contribute to the perceived adequacy of social support, and in turn, distress will help to fill this gap.

The subsequent paragraphs will 1) examine the previous findings on the relationships among social networks, social support, and health; 2) explore how differences in network capital affect social groups' access to social support and health; 3) discuss the consequences of network structures on health; 4) finally, summarize the research predictions.

## Social Networks, Social Support and Health: Previous Findings

Research on the effects of social network characteristics on social support and health has identified the types of ties and networks structures that promote access to social support and psychological well-being (Hurlbert et al. 2008; Haines and Hurlbert 1992; Wellman and Wortley 1990; Beggs, et al. 1996). In general, social support theorists argue that “to assess adequately the value of range in the personal networks for health-related outcomes and the value of the concept of range for empirical studies of the stress-distress process, its density, diversity, and size must be considered (Haines and Hurlbert 1992: 256). Social support studies show network structures that are dense, homogenous, and contain strong ties promote more access to social support transactions

I begin with network density. Network density, an inverse measure of range, can be measured by examining the “intensity or strength of ties joining alters” (Marsden 1987: 124). Strong ties are useful in connecting individuals with similar attributes and resources (Granovetter 1973; Haines and Hurlbert 1992; Lin 2000) and who “have a detailed knowledge of each other’s needs and multiple claims on each other attention” (Wellman and Wortley 1989; 564). Thus, if awareness and empathy coincide, then homophilous ties are more conducive in promoting support transactions.

Moving to network size (access to a greater volume of contacts), research suggests that network size can also influence access to network resources (i.e., latent supportive resources and instrumental resources) and, thus, social resources (e.g., job information and social support) (Haines and Hurlbert 1992; Marsden 1987; McPherson, Smith-Lovin, and Cook 2001). Following Durkheimian arguments, social support theory uses network size to index



level of social integration. That is, larger network structures increase access to latent supportive resources<sup>7</sup> and, thus, social support.

Turning to measures of range based on diversity, network diversity indicates differences of persons an ego can contact within his or her social network. I tap three measures of diversity: age, race, and gender diversity. Although diversity increases access to novel information, which is advantageous for instrumental action (e.g., gathering job information), social support theory predicts that diversity will have a negative effect on access to expressive social support. Because lack of diversity increases similarities among individuals, supportive resources are often drawn from these types of network structures.

Furthermore, social support theorists acknowledge that social support mitigates the pernicious effects (i.e., psychological distress) of stressful life events. Therefore, individuals who report higher levels of social support are likely to have better mental health (i.e., lower levels of psychological distress) than individuals with lower levels of social support.

Because network theorists and social support theorists acknowledge the role that network structure plays on perceptions of social support and, in turn, four predictions follow.

**H<sub>1</sub>: Network structures that have higher levels of density (strong ties) are more likely to promote access to latent supportive resources than network structures that have lower levels of network density.**

**H<sub>2</sub>: Larger network structures promote access to latent supportive resources than smaller network structures.**

**H<sub>3</sub>: Network structures that are less diverse (i.e., age, race, and gender) are more likely to enhance access to latent supportive resources than network structures that are more diverse.**

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<sup>7</sup> To be clear, latent supportive resources are network resources.

**H<sub>4</sub>: Social support has a direct effect on mental health (i.e., psychological distress). Individuals who have stronger social support systems have higher perceptions of access to social support than individuals who have weaker support systems.**

#### Social Class Differences on Social Relationships and Social Support

The ethnographic literature has established a relationship between social class and social ties ( Bourdieu 1983; Stack 1974; Granovetter 1973). Pierre Bourdieu (1983) pointed to this relationship by suggesting that individuals with more economic capital can afford to invest in relationships that produce social and cultural capital. In contrast, individuals with less economic capital use their social relationships to compensate for their marginal position in the marketplace. Carol Stack's (1974) seminal book, *All Our Kin*, also alluded to the importance and prevalence of strong and dense networks serving as a buffer against impoverished conditions. In sum, for Bourdieu (1983) and Stack, the form of network capital that the poor have access to enables them to survive the economic crises of poverty by drawing on their kin and close friends for supportive resources.

Since then, social scientists have examined how low-ranging networks (i.e., dense networks containing strong and homophilous ties) are instrumental in assisting in the poor's day-to-day survival. Further, these types of network structures (i.e., low-ranging networks) promote access to instrumental and latent supportive resources such as social support.

According to social support research, low-ranging network structures (i.e., dense, strong and homophilous ties) increase perceptions of access to social support and, thus, health. However, I ask whether the benefits of social support operate differently among the poor. I begin from the premise that poorer individuals are disproportionately exposed to stressful life events (Thoits 1982; 1984). Although dense, strong and homophilous network

structures might hold economic and psychological benefits for poorer individuals, these network structures might also have psychological and material costs such as “burdened by the obligations and the reciprocal demands” (Letiecq, Anderson, and Koblinsky 1996). Increased exposure to personal (i.e., personal financial difficulties) and network events (i.e., financial difficulties of someone in their family) might lessen the positive benefits of social support on their levels of psychological distress. That is, because poorer individuals are more susceptible to stressful life events, they might have perceptions of inadequate levels social support. Furthermore, individuals who perceive inadequate levels of social support will have increased psychological distress, compared to their affluent counterparts. Thus, the predictions follow:

**H<sub>5</sub>: Net of race, social class has a direct effect on individuals’ network structures. Poorer individuals tend to be embedded in lower-ranging network structures (i.e., dense networks that contain strong and homophilous ties), compared to their affluent counterparts.**

**H<sub>6</sub>: Because of the low-ranging networks that poorer individuals are embedded, they will report less access to instrumental resources.**

**H<sub>7</sub>: Poorer individuals have increased exposure to stressful life events than their affluent counterparts.**

**H<sub>8</sub>: Because poorer individuals have increased exposure to stressful life events and perceptions of inadequate levels of social support (i.e., instrumental and expressive), they tend to experience increased psychological distress than their affluent counterparts.**

### Race, Social Networks and Social Support

Since Wilson’s work on social isolation, the concern of racial variations in social ties has become a primary issue of much of ethnographic research (Tieggas, Browne and Green 1998; Brown 2003). Wilson thesis (1987) suggest that the disadvantage of poor blacks are a result of the mass departure of both industrial job opportunities and middle-class black families from inner city areas robbed poor blacks of the form of network capital that serves to

mitigate welfare dependency and unemployment. Simply put, the networks structures of poor were increasingly restricted in social and geographic range (i.e., network structure dimension), constraining their access to instrumental resources and mainstream society (i.e., network resource dimension). Wilson's argument points to the class effects on network structures, rather than race effects. For Wilson, then, social isolation is a common feature among the poor. Thus,

**H<sub>9</sub>: net of class, race differences in network structures (i.e., density, diversity, and size), social support, and mental health (i.e., distress) will lessen.**

## CHAPTER 4: DATA AND METHODS

### Introduction

This chapter is divided into three major sections. **Section one** describes the sample and data source used in this analysis. **Section two** provides both conceptual and operational definitions of all the variables that are presented in the forthcoming analyses. Section **three** discusses the methods for analyzing race and class differences in the stress-support distress process. I also present tables for the means and standard deviations for all the variables used.

### Part I: Sample and Data

The research expectations presented in Chapter 3 will be analyzed by using data collected in a 2003 study of residents in Orleans Parish, Louisiana (the parish that includes New Orleans). The data were collected by through telephone interviews, using random-digit-dialing to select the sample<sup>8</sup>. Interviews were conducted in February, March, and April of 2003.

Constructing a measure for network capital required the use of three name generators and a series of name interpreters. The first name generator, which tapped routine confidants of respondents, was a modified version of the name-eliciting question used in the 1985 General Social Survey (GSS) (Burt 1992; Hurlbert et al. 2000; Marsden 1987). Respondents were asked to name five individuals with whom they discussed important matters in the six months prior to the interview. To tap routine associates of respondents, respondents were asked to name five individuals with whom they socialized routinely (Fischer 1982). Both of

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<sup>8</sup> To ensure that only adult respondents who resided in New Orleans were interviewed screening questions were included.

these name generators tap relatively strong ties (Marsden 1987; Haines and Hurlbert 1992; Hurlbert et al. 2000; Hurlbert et al. 2008; McPherson, Smith-Lovin and Brashears 2006). To examine weaker ties, respondents were asked to name up to five individuals who they knew well enough to call up on the phone but did not know well – individuals they would call “friends-of-friends or acquaintances” (see Granovetter 1973; Hurlbert et al. 2008). The networks I examined included all nonredundant alters elicited by these three name generators.

Information about the personal characteristics (including gender, race, age, level of education, whether they had a working telephone, whether they had a working car, and whether they were homeowners) and the characteristics of the relationship between the respondents and each alter (how close the respondent felt to the alter) were obtained by the name interpreter questions. Measures of the structure and resource elements of network capital were constructed from these questions.

## Part II: Measures

### The Structure Element of Network Capital

Network capital theorists maintain that the structure and resource element of network capital affect access to social resources, thus, affecting outcomes. In addition, network capital theorists contend that there are social group variations in access to network capital, creating inequality in social resources and outcomes. To examine the effects of network capital on social resources (i.e., social support) and, in turn, health outcomes, measures of the structure and resource element of network capital are constructed from the following variables.

Density. Network density taps the proportion of maximum-intensity relationships in a network. To construct a network density measure, a structural measure, respondents' reports

of whether each pair of network members (alters) was (1) very close to each other, (0.5) somewhat close to each other, or (0) not really close to each other was used. Thus, the density measure ranges from 0 (where network members [i.e., alters] are unaware of one another) to 1 (where network members [i.e., alters] are very close) (Hurlbert et al. 2000; Marsden 1987).

Size. Network size measures the total number of nonredundant alters listed in response to the name generators (a maximum number of 15).

Diversity. The diversity measure examines, sex, race, and age similarities among alters. Age diversity taps the average of the absolute value of the difference between the age of the respondent and the age of each member of his or her network is calculated. For the nominal characteristics, race and sex, diversity is measured by employing the index of qualitative variation (IQV). The IQV measures the degree of race and gender dispersion within the respondent's network. In this analysis, a lower IQV indicates a homophilious network; whereas a higher scores indices a more diverse network.

#### The Resource Element of Network Capital

Instrumental Resources. I use two types of measures to construct an instrumental resource measure: (a) access to mainstream resources and (b) access to mainstream individuals. Starting with access to mainstream instrumental resources, I measure the proportion of network members who are (1) homeowners or not (0); who have access to working phones (1) or not (0); and who are car owners (1) or not (0). For the aforementioned measures, higher values signal more access to higher network capital in the form of instrumental resources.

Turning to access to mainstream individuals, I use the average education of network members from respondents' reports of the highest grade of school or college that each alters completed.

Latent Supportive Resources. Respondents were asked to list individuals from whom they regularly get everyday help. Higher values indicate more access to latent supportive resources.

### Social Support

Perceived Social Support. In general, the social support literature demonstrates that perceived adequacy of support is more beneficial in the stress-distress process; thus perception of social support is the measure of choice. Two items were used to construct perceived expressive and instrumental support. The first item, which measured perceived emotional support, asked respondents "About how much of the time would you say you have enough people to talk to?" Responses ranged from (1) never to (4) a lot of time. The second item, which measures perceived instrumental support, asked respondents "About how much of the time would you say you have enough people to help you?" Responses ranged from (1) never to (4) a lot of time.

### Mental Health

Distress. The health literature suggest that women, minorities, and individuals of a lower social class are more vulnerable to experience depression or distress than their male, white, upper-class counterparts (see Thoits 1995; Ross and Mirowsky 2001, 2002; Perlin 1989). Distress was constructed by using a modified 7-item version of the Center for Epidemiological Studies' scale of Depression (CES-D) (Ross and Mirowsky's 2002)<sup>9</sup>.

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<sup>9</sup> Depressive symptoms are good indexes of distress (Ross and Mirkowsky 2002).



Respondents were asked, “How many days during the past week have you: (1) felt that you just could not get going, (2) felt sad, (3) had trouble getting to sleep or staying asleep, (4) felt that everything was an effort, (5) felt lonely, (6) felt that you could not shake the blues, (7) had trouble keeping your mind on what you were doing.” To construct a distress measure, a mean score was taken across the items. The cronbach’s alpha coefficient is .85.

### Social Groups

Stratification and network theorists maintain that resources (such as social support and job information) and such outcomes as health are unevenly distributed across social groups. This research will investigate what key form of network capital facilitates/restricts access to social support and thus, affects health outcomes across class and race groups (i.e., blacks and whites).

Race. Ethnographic researchers posit that race directly affects access to certain forms of network capital, social support, and health. To evaluate this argument, I will examine black and white racial groups. Race is coded (1) white and black (0).

Social Class. The effect of social class on social resources and outcomes is a reoccurring concept throughout the stratification literature. Despite this concept’s familiarity within the social sciences, scholars recognize the variability and flexibility in the “degree or precision in the definition of class” (Lareau 2008). As a result, there is a considerable amount of obscurity in the conceptual and/or operational definitions of social class, creating opposition and confusion in the empirical study of social class.

Researchers tend to adopt the theoretical approaches of Marx, Weber, and Bourdieu to analyze class, rather than employing empirical methodologies for class analysis. However, Michael Hout’s (2008) study employed an empirical approach to understanding and

conceptualizing social class. He found that individuals' subjective class identities were congruent to their objective circumstances, creating similar life chances and identities among class groups. Thus, from individuals' subjective social class placement, he used income, education, and occupation to construct class categories<sup>10</sup>. As expected, individuals with higher levels of income and education subjectively place themselves in middle- to upper-class categories<sup>11</sup>. In contrast, individuals with lower-levels of education and income subjectively place themselves in working- to working/lower-class categories.

Drawing from Hout's (2008) class category creations, education and income<sup>12</sup> were crossed to construct social class. Starting with income, respondents who reported household incomes of 24,999 or less were coded as 1; 25,000 to 49,999 were coded as 2; 50,000 to 74,999, coded as 3; and 75,000 or above coded as 4<sup>13</sup>. Moving to education, respondents' who reported less than a high school education were coded as 1; high school education, coded 2; some college, coded 3; college degree, coded as 4; and more than college, coded as 5. Table 4.1 illustrates the relationship between income and education and social class.

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<sup>10</sup> Hout (2008 ) recognized that class "inconsistencies arises because income, occupation, and education are correlated, but not perfectly." However, the prevalence of class inconsistencies has been mitigated by the changes in the economy. Industrial changes and The Civil Rights Movement increased the association between education and earnings in the 70's and 80's. Thus women's and minorities increase in educational opportunities increased their earning potential. As a result of these trends, some of the inconsistencies in class location placements have been resolved.

<sup>11</sup> Class categories are more distinct when the objective elements (i.e., income, occupation, and education) are at extreme high or low levels.

<sup>12</sup> Although Hout (2008) occupational statuses are key measures in predicting social class, this study did not capture occupational status. Unfortunately occupational measures were not available for this data.

<sup>13</sup> A prediction equation was created to estimate family income for respondents who failed to report it. Details are available upon request.

Working/lower-class and working class categories were subsumed<sup>14</sup> as working/lower-class and coded as 0 and middle-class individuals were coded as 1.

**Table 4.1: Class Categories, by Class and Income**

	<b>Less than High School</b>	<b>High School</b>	<b>Some College</b>	<b>College Degree</b>	<b>More than College</b>
<i>Income</i>					
24,999 or less	Lower-class	Lower-class	Lower-class	Working-class	Working-class
25,000 to 49,999	Working-class	Working-class	Working-class	Working-class	Middle-class
50,000 to 74,999	Working-class	Working-class	Middle-class	Middle-class	Middle-class
75,000 or more	Middle-class	Middle-class	Middle-class	Middle-class	Middle-class

**Note: Lower-Class (N) = 121; Working-Class (N) = 195; Middle-Class (N) = 256**

*Source: Michael Hout's (2008) class identifications*

### Stressful Life Events

Stress Index. Social support theorists argue that stressful life events negatively affect mental health. The use of a stress scale for evaluating the health risk associated with stressful

**Table 4.2.: Loadings from factor analysis of the stress items<sup>15</sup>**

Stress items	Rotated Component	
	Stress 1	Stress 2
Stress Index		
Had a problem at work (Stress 2)	<b>.843</b>	-.183
Had problems with your family (Stress 3)	<b>.682</b>	.281
Had financial problems (Stress 4)	<b>.638</b>	.359
Had serious illness or injury (Stress 5)	.102	<b>.782</b>
Had a close friend or relative die (Stress 1)	.087	<b>.661</b>

**Note:** Major loadings for each item are bolded.

life events has been supported in the literature (Haines and Hurlbert 1992; Lin, Ye, and Ensel, 1999). To measure stressful life events, each respondent was asked if he or she had experienced each event in the past 12 months. Responses were coded yes (1) and (0) for each

<sup>14</sup> Because few respondents fell in the lower-class (N= 121) categories, I combined working- and lower-class categories.

of the stress indicators. Factor analyses indicated that item 1 (had a close relative die) and item 5 (had serious illness or injury) were orthogonal to the other items. For that reason, the scale consists of the sum of the other three items (see table 4.2). The cronbach's alpha coefficient is .587.

### Personal Characteristics and Control Variables

Personal Characteristics. Because characteristics such as age, gender, and marital status have shown to have effects on network capital, access to social support, and health (Lin 2000; Moore 1990; Pearlin 1989; Thoits 1984), this study controls for such variables. I measure age in number of respondent years. Gender is coded (1) male and (0) female. Marital status is (1) for married and (0) for unmarried<sup>16</sup>. To tap respondent's health, a four-point scale from excellent (coded 4) to poor (coded 1) was constructed.

### Part III: Analyses Procedure

To explore the stress, support, and health relationship by race and class, I begin by examining network capital differences by race and class (Chapter 5). Using independent samples t-test, I assess the effects of race and class on access to the *structure* and *resource* element of network capital. **Part I** of chapter 5 addresses how access to the structure element of network capital varies by race and class. Using independent samples t-test, I assess whether or not there are race/class differences in access to structure element of network capital (i.e., network density, network size, and gender, race, and age diversity). Using ordinary least squares regression, I then ask (1) how individual-level factors affect access to network capital by race and class.

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<sup>16</sup> Because of limitations in the data, I was unable to investigate the effects of individuals who were separated, widowed or divorced.

In **Part II** of chapter 5, I examine differences in the resource element of network capital by race and class. Using ordinary least squares regression, I address (a) whether and how the structure element of network capital affect access to the resource element of network capital by race and class.

Chapter 6 examines differences in perceptions of social support adequacy. Specifically, this chapter asks (a) which race and class groups report higher levels of social support (b) and how the structure and resource elements of network capital affect access to social support, by class and race. Using independent samples t-test, **Part I** of chapter 6 examines the unequal distributions of perceived adequacy of instrumental and expressive social support. Using ordinary least squares regression, **Part II** of this chapter assesses how the social support process differs by race and class.

The concluding phases of my analyses assess race and class differences in the stress-support-distress-process. Specifically, chapter 7 asks (1) which groups have increased exposure to stressful life events and (2) how the stress-support-distress process differs by race and class. Using independent sample t-tests, **part I** of this chapter assesses whether some groups (i.e., race /or social classes) experience increased exposure to stressful life events. Using ordinary least squares, **Part II** examines whether the stress-support-distress process differs by race and class.

### Descriptive Statistics

Means and standard deviations of all variables are listed in Tables 4.3., 4.4.<sup>17</sup>, 4.5., 4.6. Table 4.3 present means and standard deviations for all tables used in this study. Based on

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<sup>17</sup> Because I examine means and standard deviations by race, and race and class, I only discuss means and standard deviations for all variables in my analysis. Chapters 5, 6, and 7 will cover a more extensive discussion of means and standard deviations by race and class.

data collected in a 2003 study of residents in Orleans Parish, Louisiana, the sample consisted of 37% male and 63% female. Approximately, 63% of the sample report that they are currently married and 37% report that are currently not married. The mean age of the sample was 45 years. The sample consisted of 50% blacks and 50% whites<sup>18</sup>. Based on respondent's reports of education and income levels, 44% of respondents were assigned to middle-class status.

A number of measures were used to construct the structure (i.e., network density, network diversity and network size) and resource element of network capital (i.e., instrumental resources, mainstream individuals, and latent supportive resources). Starting with network density, the sample was densely interconnected, with a mean density of .790. The mean age heterogeneity (i.e., age diversity) difference was 9.26. For gender diversity, the mean was .510. The mean network size among respondents was 3.066. Moving to the resource element of network capital, over half the sample reported owning their homes (56%), car (89%); and having working telephones (97%).

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<sup>18</sup> This study only examined blacks and whites, all other groups were eliminated from the sample.

<b>Table 4.3.: Means and Standard Deviations of Variables used in Analyses</b>		
	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Standard Deviation</b>
<b><u>Dependent Variables</u></b>		
<b>The Structure Element of Network Capital</b>		
Network Density	.790	.212
Network Diversity		
Gender Diversity	.510	.443
Race Diversity	.083	.221
Age Diversity	9.261	6.795
Network Size	3.066	1.692
<b>The Resource Element of Network Capital</b>		
Instrumental Resources		
Homeowner (yes)	.568	.399
Car owner (yes)	.898	.227
Home phone (yes)	.979	.118
Network member's Education	14.742	2.74
Latent supportive resources	.504	.964
<b>Social Support</b>		
Perceived Instrumental Support	3.291	.855
Perceived Expressive Support	3.577	.710
<b><u>Independent Variables</u></b>		
<b>Social Groups</b>		
Race (white)	.500	.500
Social Class (middle-class)	.447	.497
<b>Stressful Life Events</b>		
Stress	.897	1.012
Distress	1.05	1.33
<b>Personal Characteristics</b>		
Gender (male)	.375	.484
Marital Status (married)	.628	.483
Health	3.008	.784
Age	45.078	15.008
	<b>N= 351</b>	

<b>Table 4.4: Means and Standard Deviations of Variables used in Analyses, by Race</b>				
	Blacks		Whites	
	Means	(SD)	Means	(SD)
<b><u>Dependent Variables</u></b>				
<b>The Structure Element of Network Capital</b>				
Network Density	.779	.220	.793	.209
Network Diversity				
Gender Diversity	.427	.451	.585	.419
Race Diversity	.063	.208	.102	.233
Age Diversity				
Network Size	2.732	1.385	3.423	1.907
<b>The Resource Element of Network Capital</b>				
Instrumental Resources				
Homeowner (yes)	.510	.414	.615	.378
Car owner (yes)	.854	.271	.936	.176
Home phone (yes)	.964	.159	.990	.077
Network member's Education	13.539	2.620	15.641	2.439
Latent supportive resources	.495	.882	.513	1.023
<b>Social Support</b>				
Perceived Instrumental Support	3.046	.918	3.500	.740
Perceived Expressive Support	3.43	.816	3.679	.586
<b><u>Independent Variables</u></b>				
<b>Social Groups</b>				
Race (white)	-----	-----	-----	-----
Social Class (middle-class)	.274	.447	.606	.489
<b>Stressful Life Events</b>				
Stress	1.11	1.073	.747	.922
Distress	1.382	1.526	.848	1.1145
<b>Personal Characteristics</b>				
Gender (male)	.352	.478	.367	.691
Household size	2.78	2.04	2.223	1.553
Marital Status (married)	.579	.494	.674	.469
Health	2.837	2.040	3.159	.691
<b>Age</b>	45.176	15.328	45.617	14.746
	<b>N= 156</b>		<b>N=195</b>	



<b>Table 4.5: Means and Standard Deviations of Variables used in Analyses, by Class</b>				
	Working-Class		Middle-Class	
	Means	(SD)	Means	(SD)
<b><u>Dependent Variables</u></b>				
<b>The Structure Element of Network Capital</b>				
Network Density	.784	.218	.803	.197
Network Diversity				
Gender Diversity	.466	.452	.546	.427
Race Diversity	.068	.209	.099	.230
Age Diversity	9.24	6.92	9.197	6.690
Network Size	2.718	1.369	3.51	1.923
<b>The Resource Element of Network Capital</b>				
Instrumental Resources				
Homeowner (yes)	.479	.409	.674	.356
Car owner (yes)	.850	.275	.961	.107
Home phone (yes)	.964	.159	.997	.026
Network member's Education	13.810	2.824	15.849	2.056
Latent supportive resources	.428	.887	.603	1.063
<b>Social Support</b>				
Perceived Instrumental Support	3.133	.897	3.500	.747
Perceived Expressive Support	3.442	.819	3.728	.519
<b><u>Independent Variables</u></b>				
<b>Social Groups</b>				
Race (white)	.350	.477	.686	.465
Social Class (middle-class)	-----	-----	-----	-----
<b>Stressful Life Events</b>				
Stress	1.015	1.037	.812	.980
<b>Personal Characteristics</b>				
Gender (male)	.370	.483	.378	.486
Household size	2.46	2.03	2.52	1.422
Marital Status (married)	.517	.500	.742	.438
Health	2.83	.824	3.196	.676
Age	43.656	15.666	45.99	13.652
	<b>N= 178</b>		<b>N= 173</b>	

**Table 4.6: Means and Standard Deviations of Variables used in Analysis, by Working/lower-class (LC)**

	Blacks (LC)		White (LC)	
	Means	(SD)	Means	(SD)
<b><u>Dependent Variables</u></b>				
<b>The Structure Element of Network Capital</b>				
Network Density	.780	.220	.788	.217
Network Diversity				
Gender Diversity	.408	.447	.571	.441
Race Diversity	.054	.200	.095	.231
Age Diversity	9.062	6.717	10.048	7.053
Network Size	2.582	1.262	2.941	1.471
<b>The Resource Element of Network Capital</b>				
Instrumental Resources				
Homeowner (yes)	.453	.413	.543	.405
Car owner (yes)	.829	.291	.882	.253
Home phone (yes)	.949	.190	.543	.405
Network member's Education	13.010	2.464	14.847	2.788
Latent supportive resources	.366	.660	.453	1.091
<b>Social Support</b>				
Perceived Instrumental Support	2.955	.929	3.428	.799
Perceived Expressive Support	3.361	.882	3.540	.720
<b><u>Independent Variables</u></b>				
<b>Social Groups</b>				
Race (white)	.000	.000	1.000	1.00
Social Class (middle-class)	.000	.000	.000	.000
<b>Stressful Life Events</b>				
Stress	1.142	1.057	.806	.970
<b>Personal Characteristics</b>				
Gender (male)	.357	.480	.357	.481
Household size	2.745	.837	2.010	1.885
Marital Status (married)	.528	.500	.525	.501
Health	2.745	2.173	2.969	.738
Age	43.822	15.527	44.968	15.628
	<b>N =105</b>		<b>N =73</b>	

**Table 4.7: Means and Standard Deviations of Variables used in Analysis, by Middle-class (MC)**

	Blacks (MC)		White (MC)	
	Means	(SD)	Means	(SD)
<b><u>Dependent Variables</u></b>				
<b>The Structure Element of Network Capital</b>				
Network Density	.795	.195	.799	.203
Network Diversity				
Gender Diversity	.408	.447	.584	.404
Race Diversity	.054	.200	.100	.226
Age Diversity	9.062	6.717	8.550	6.359
Network Size	2.582	1.262	3.753	2.105
<b>The Resource Element of Network Capital</b>				
Instrumental Resources				
Homeowner (yes)	.453	.413	.655	.357
Car owner (yes)	.892	.291	.969	.089
Home phone (yes)	.949	.190	.996	.031
Network member's Education	14.984	2.239	16.110	1.932
Latent supportive resources	.366	.660	.553	.996
<b>Social Support</b>				
Perceived Instrumental Support	3.333	.798	3.546	.710
Perceived Expressive Support	3.652	.564	3.760	.473
<b><u>Independent Variables</u></b>				
<b>Social Groups</b>				
Race (white)	.000	.000	1.000	1.000
Social Class (middle-class)	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000
<b>Stressful Life Events</b>				
Stress	1.087	1.121	.728	.430
Distress	.842	1.187	.696	.860
<b>Personal Characteristics</b>				
Gender (male)	.333	.474	.370	.484
Household size	2.985	1.744	2.317	1.266
Marital Status (married)	.691	.465	.728	.484
Health	3.087	.658	3.280	.635
Age	47.955	14.268	45.248	13.679
	<b>N =51</b>		<b>N =122</b>	

## CHAPTER 5: NETWORK CAPITAL

### Introduction

Stratification theorists have demonstrated that social and demographic characteristics affect the structure and resource elements of network capital (Wilson 1992; Granovetter 1973; Hurlbert et al. 2008; Lin 2000) and that network capital, in turn, affects economic and noneconomic outcomes (Lin 2000; Hurlbert et al. 2008; Moore 1990; Granovetter 1973; Wilson 1992). Hurlbert et al. (2008) maintain that understanding network capital differences provides insight into how social resources are unevenly distributed across social groups.

Currently, network theorists argue that there are certain network structures that promote/restrict access to certain resources (see Hurlbert et al. 2008; Granovetter 1973) and, thus differentially affect outcomes. Literature on network capital differences across social groups focus almost exclusively on economic outcomes (i.e., jobs) (see Granovetter 1973; Hurlbert et al. 2008; Lin 2000; Moore 1990; Ibarra 1995); however, this research is concerned with how variations in the structure and resource elements of network capital affect access to noneconomic outcomes (i.e., health) across race and class. Thus, variations in network capital constitute the focus of this chapter.

This chapter presents empirical results for the analyses of network capital. Specifically, I focus on the effects of race and class on access to the *structure* and *resource* elements of network capital. The first part of this chapter asks how access to the structure element of network capital varies by race and class. Using independent samples t-test, I ask whether or not there are race/class differences in access to structure element of network capital (i.e., network density, network size, and gender, race, and age diversity). Using ordinary least squares regression, I then ask (1) how individual-level factors affect access to network capital by race and class.

In the second part of this chapter, I examine variations in the resource element of network capital. Using ordinary least squares regression, I explore whether and how the structure element of network capital affects access to the resource element of network capital by race and class.

## Part I

### The Structure Element of Network Capital

Class. Comparisons of network capital *by class* begin with the structure element of network capital (Table 5.1). I ask whether differences in network structure exist between middle- and working/lower-class individuals (independent of race). Consistent with Wilson's and Granovetter's arguments, I find class differences in access to the structure element of network capital. The results for two measures of the structure element of network capital – network size and gender diversity – lend support to the proposition (**H<sub>5</sub>**): *that individuals of working/lower-class statuses are embedded in network structures (i.e., network size and network diversity) that are lower-ranging, compared to their affluent counterparts.* Thus, I find that working/lower-class individuals have smaller network structures and less gender diversity, compared to their more affluent counterparts. To assess the magnitude of the mean differences, I calculated eta-squared measures<sup>19</sup>. For network size disparities between middle-class (M = .803, SD = .197) and working/lower-class individuals (M = .784, SD = .218), the mean difference was modest (eta squared = .05). For gender diversity differences, the

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<sup>19</sup> Eta squared is the proportion of the total variance that is attributed to an effect. It is calculated as the ratio of the effect variance ( $SS_{\text{effect}}$ ) to the total variance ( $SS_{\text{total}}$ ) (Pallant 2007). Ranging from 0 to 1, eta squared measures the effect size statistics. It provides an indication of the magnitude of the differences between groups (i.e., blacks and whites). To interpret eta-squared results, Cohen (1988) suggests that values ranging from: 0 to .01 are considered small effects; .01 to .06 are considered moderate effects; and .06 to 1 are considered larger effects (Pallant 2007).

mean difference between middle- (M= .546, SD=.427) and working/lower-class (M=.466, SD=.452) is small (eta squared = .008).

<b>Table 5.1. Independent Samples T-Test of the Structure Element of Network Capital, by Class</b>				
	Middle-class		Working/Lower-Class	
	Mean	N	Mean	N
<b>Density</b>	.803	204	.784	241
<b>Size***</b>	3.514	212	2.718	252
<b>Diversity</b>				
<b>Gender Diversity*</b>	.546	209	.466	250
<b>Race Diversity</b>	.099	210	.068	246
<b>Age Diversity</b>	9.197	206	9.243	243
* p ≤ .05; ** p < .01; ***p<.000; ; +p ≤ .05; ++ p < .01; +++p<.000 (one-tailed)				

<b>Table 5.2. Independent Samples T-Test of the Structure Element of Network Capital, by Race</b>				
	Whites		Blacks	
	Mean	N	Mean	N
<b>Density</b>	.793	212	.779	194
<b>Size***</b>	3.423	222	2.732	202
<b>Diversity</b>				
<b>Gender Diversity***</b>	.585	219	.427	199
<b>Race Diversity</b>	.102	221	.063	200
<b>Age Diversity</b>	9.194	215	9.600	194
* p ≤ .05; ** p < .01; ***p<.000; ; +p ≤ .05; ++ p < .01; +++p<.000 (one-tailed)				

Race. Turning to race differences in the structure element of network capital, Table 5.2 presents mean differences between blacks' and whites' network structures (independent of class). Two measures of the structure element of network capital, network size and gender diversity, differ significantly between blacks and whites. Whites are embedded in networks that are larger (M=3.42, SD=1.90) than blacks' networks (M=2.732, SD=1.385). The magnitude of the differences in the means was small (eta-squared=.04). I also found

significant gender diversity differences between whites' and blacks' network structures; whites describe network structures that have more gender diversity (M= .585, SD=.419) than blacks (M=.427, SD=.451). However, the magnitude of the difference in the means is small (eta-squared=.03).

Race and Class. To examine whether race differences will attenuate after controlling for class, I ask how the structure element of network capital (see Tables 5.3 and 5.4) differs by race and class. My findings do not support my research prediction which states that **(H9) net of class, race differences in network structures (i.e., size) will attenuate.** In fact, I find that the network structures of working/lower-class whites are larger (M=2.94, SD=1.41) than those of working/lower-class blacks' (M=2.58, SD=1.262) (Table 5.3). The mean difference in network size between the groups was small (eta squared= .01). I also found gender diversity differences. White, working/lower-class individuals also had greater gender diversity (M=.585, SD=.419) in their network structures than black, working/lower-class individuals (M=.427, SD=.451). The mean difference was small (eta-squared=.03).

	Working/lower-class Blacks	N	Working/lower-class Whites	N
<b>Density</b>	.780	134	.788	81
<b>Size*</b>	2.582	139	2.941	86
<b>Diversity</b>				
<b>Gender Diversity**</b>	.408	138	.571	85
<b>Race Diversity</b>	.054	137	.095	85
<b>Age Diversity</b>	9.062	134	10.048	82
* p ≤ .05; ** p < .01; ***p<.000				

For middle-class individuals (**Table 5.4**), only one measure of the structure element of network capital differed significantly by race: middle-class blacks had more age diversity in

their network structures than middle-class whites. However, the magnitude of the differences in means was very small (eta squared = .02).

	Middle-class Blacks	N	Middle Class Whites	N
Density	.795	54	.799	125
Size	3.175	57	3.753	130
Diversity				
Gender	.458	56	.584	128
Race	.092	57	.100	130
Age*	10.957	54	8.550	127

\* p ≤ .05; \*\* p < .01; \*\*\* p < .000

In sum, my findings do not support the proposition that states (**H<sub>9</sub>**): *race differences in access to network structure will attenuate after controlling for class*. In fact, I find that regardless of class, race differences exist between the network structures of blacks and whites. To understand better the race and class effects on access to the structure element of network, I ask what individual factors explain variations in the structure element of network capital by (1) class and (2) race.

Exploring the Structure Element of Network Capital, by Class. I begin to address this question by exploring what individual-level factors affect access to the structure element of network capital, by class (see table 5.5 and 5.6). Among working/lower-class individuals (table 5.5), working/lower-class whites describe larger network structures than working/lower-class blacks do. Working/lower-class whites also describe networks of greater gender diversity than working/lower-class blacks do. These findings provide evidence that, after controlling for class, race differences remain among working/lower-class individuals.

I also find that working/lower-class women report more age diversity in their network structures than men do (Table .5.5). I find mixed results for age. Younger, working/lower-



class individuals report greater race diversity in their network structures than older working/lower-class individuals. However, older working/lower-class individuals report more age diversity than their younger, working/lower-class counterparts. If older working/lower-class individuals' network structures are composed mostly of kin, these findings are not surprising. According to Hurlbert et al. (2008: 23), the age effect on age diversity "might owe to the predominance of kin – particularly children – in older individuals' network structures".

Turning to middle-class individuals (Table 5.6), I find that middle-class whites tend to describe larger network structures than middle-class blacks do. Individuals who live in larger households describe larger network structures than individuals who live in smaller network structures. I also find that middle-class women report more age diversity than middle-class men. This gender effect is not surprising if women typically report more kin in their network structures, compared to men. In fact, research consistently demonstrates that women typically maintain closer ties to kin and fewer ties outside of kin, compared to men (Moore 1990). In addition, I find that older individuals also report greater age diversity in their network structures than younger individuals do. This age effect suggests that across socioeconomic strata, older individuals report more age diversity in their network structures than younger individuals do. As previously mentioned, this age effect is not surprising, if older individuals are embedded in network structures that consist mostly of kin (Hurlbert et al. 2008; Fisher 1982; Marsden 1987).

Exploring the Structure Element of Network Capital, by Race. I now move to individual factors that affect access to the structure element of network capital for blacks (see Table 5.7.). I find mixed results for age: older blacks describe more age diversity in their network

structures than younger blacks do. Younger blacks report greater race diversity in their network structures than older blacks do. I also find that blacks who are married report more race diversity in their network structures than their unmarried black counterparts do. In addition, black females report more age diversity in their network structures than their black male counterparts. Consistent with Wilson's argument, black middle-class individuals have significantly larger network structures and describe greater race diversity<sup>20</sup> in their network structures than black working/lower-class individuals do.

Turning to the structure element of network capital for whites (Table 5.8), whites with larger household sizes report larger network structures. Like black females, white females describe networks of greater age diversity than white males do; older, white individuals also describe network structures with greater age diversity than younger white individuals do. Younger whites are also more likely to describe more racial diversity in their network structures than older whites do; this pattern mirrors the age pattern seen among blacks. Similar to blacks, I find class effects on network structures. Middle-class whites have larger network structures than working/lower-class whites. This finding is consistent with Wilson's argument that socially isolating network structures are not unique to blacks, but tends to a more prevalent feature among the poor. Therefore, I find support for H<sub>5</sub>: *Net of race, socioeconomic status has a direct effect on individuals' network structures*. Poorer individuals are more likely to be embedded in lower-ranging network structures (i.e., dense networks that contain strong and homophilous ties), compared to their affluent counterparts.

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<sup>20</sup> Significance is found on a one-tailed test (see table 5.7).

<b>Table 5.5: Ordinary Least Squares Regression of the Structure Element of Network Capital, for Working/Lower-class Individuals</b>										
	<b>Network Density</b>		<b>Network Size</b>		<b>Network Diversity (Gender)</b>		<b>Network Diversity (Race)</b>		<b>Network Diversity (Age)</b>	
<b>Working/lower-class</b>										
<b>Individual Characteristics</b>	Coefficient	S.E.	Coefficient	S.E.	Coefficient	S.E.	Coefficient	S.E.	Coefficient	S.E.
<b>Intercept</b>	.749	.059	2.369	.368	.569	.121	.110	.053	3.359	1.781
<b>Sex (male)</b>	-.037	.033	.080	.201	-.021	.066	.001	.029	-2.424*	.975
<b>Married (yes)</b>	.037	.033	.099	.203	.063	.067	.046	.029	-.127	.997
<b>Household Size</b>	.004	.007	.018	.044	-.005	.014	-.005	.006	.154	.214
<b>Age</b>	.001	.001	.002	.006	-.003	.002	-.002*	.001	.143***	.032
<b>Social Group</b>										
<b>Race (white)</b>	-.004	.032	.424*	.198	.163**	.065	.053	.028	1.061	.966
	N= 192		N= 200		N =198		N=199		N= 197	
	R <sup>2</sup> =.019		R <sup>2</sup> = .025		R <sup>2</sup> = .046		R <sup>2</sup> = .049		R <sup>2</sup> = .143	
<b>* p ≤ .05; ** p &lt; .01; ***p&lt;.000</b>										

**Table 5.6: Ordinary Least Squares Regression of the Structure Element of Network Capital, for Middle-class Individuals**

	Network Density		Network Size		Network Diversity (Gender)		Network Diversity (Race)		Network Diversity (Age)	
Middle-class										
Individual Characteristics	Coefficient	S.E.	Coefficient	S.E.	Coefficient	S.E.	Coefficient	S.E.	Coefficient	S.E.
<b>Intercept</b>	.800	.076	2.553	.734	.445	.160	.179	.084	4.032	2.331
<b>Sex (male)</b>	-.009	.032	-.176	.307	-.068	.067	.009	.035	-2.956**	.975
<b>Married (yes)</b>	.034	.035	-.309	.334	-.022	.074	-.011	.038	-1.848	1.062
<b>Household Size</b>	-.017	.011	.251*	.103	.001	.022	.008	.012	.393	.328
<b>Age</b>	.001	.011	.003	.001	.001	.002	-.002	.001	.166***	.035
<b>Social Group</b>										
<b>Race (white)</b>	-.001	.034	.770*	.328	.129	.072	.003	.038	-1.433	1.051
	N=172		N= 183		N =180		N =183		N= 179	
	R <sup>2</sup> = .027		R <sup>2</sup> =.055		R <sup>2</sup> = .024		R <sup>2</sup> = .028		R <sup>2</sup> =.177	

\* p ≤ .05; \*\* p < .01; \*\*\*p<.000

**Table: 5.7. Ordinary Least Square Regressions of the Structure Element of Network Capital, for Blacks**

	Network Density		Network Size		Network Diversity (Gender)		Network Diversity (Race)		Network Diversity (Age)	
<b>Blacks</b>										
<b>Individual Characteristics</b>	Coefficient	S.E.	Coefficient	S.E.	Coefficient	S.E.	Coefficient	S.E.	Coefficient	S.E.
<b>Intercept</b>	.765	.065	2.836	.437	.717	.139	.087	.060	3.292	1.981
<b>Sex (male)</b>	-.056	.034	-.179	.228	-.016	.073	.008	.031	-3.695**	1.045
<b>Married (yes)</b>	.035	.034	.021	.224	-.029	.072	.061*	.030	-.324	1.035
<b>Household Size</b>	-.003	.008	.009	.051	-.024	.016	.002	.007	.255	.230
<b>Age</b>	.001	.001	-.005	.008	-.004	.002	-.002*	.001	.152***	.035
<b>Social Group</b>										
<b>Class (middle-class)</b>	-.007	.035	.598**	.233	.053	.075	.059+	.032	1.068	1.075
	N=166; R <sup>2</sup> =.031		N=174; R <sup>2</sup> =.044		N172; R <sup>2</sup> =.029	N=174; R <sup>2</sup> =.058		N=170; R <sup>2</sup> =.190		
* p ≤ .05; ** p < .01; ***p<.000; + p ≤ .05; ++ p < .01; +++p<.000 (one tailed)										

**Table 5.8. Ordinary Least Square Regressions of the Structure Element of Network Capital, for Whites**

	Network Density		Network Size		Network Diversity (Gender)		Network Diversity (Race)		Network Diversity (Age)	
<b>Whites</b>										
<b>Individual Characteristics</b>	Coefficient	S.E.	Coefficient	S.E.	Coefficient	S.E.	Coefficient	S.E.	Coefficient	S.E.
<b>Intercept</b>	.744	.058	2.497	.522	.506	.117	.209	.062	4.768	1.763
<b>Sex (male)</b>	.005	.031	.035	.270	-.062	.060	.002	.032	-1.762*	.917
<b>Married (yes)</b>	.025	.033	.031	.289	.088	.065	-.009	.034	-1.229	.984
<b>Household Size</b>	-.001	.009	.162*	.081	.017	.018	-.009	.010	.014	.274
<b>Age</b>	.001	.001	.003	.009	.001	.002	-.002*	.001	.149***	.031
<b>Social Group</b>										
<b>Class (middle-class)</b>	.015	.031	.697**	.276	-.043	.062	.012	.033	-1.407	.940
	N =202; R <sup>2</sup> =.009		N=209; R <sup>2</sup> =.056		N=206; R <sup>2</sup> =.020		N=208; R <sup>2</sup> =.023		N=206; R <sup>2</sup> =.133	
<b>* p ≤ .05; ** p &lt; .01; ***p&lt;.000</b>										

Network structures that are more restrictive in range (i.e., network structures that are smaller and less diversity) constrain access to certain network resources (i.e., mainstream resources and mainstream individuals). Wilson (1992: 642) refers to these types of network structures as socially isolating. Furthermore, restrictive network structures “deprives residents of . . . [network] resources and conventional role models” and, in turn, restricts social mobility. Because social isolation is a common feature among the poor, it can be theoretically applied to all racial and ethnic groups.

Consistent with Wilson’s argument, I do find that class effects network structures: Working/lower-class individuals tend to be embedded in networks structures that have less gender diversity and are smaller in size. However, beyond the effects of class, I find that poor blacks are embedded in network structures that are more restrictive than poor whites. Tiegges, Browne and Green (1998) argue that socially isolating network structures are more evident among poor blacks, compared to their poor white counterparts. Because poor blacks tend to live among other poor people (Massey and Denton 1993), their network structures might be more socially isolating compared to Hispanics or non-Hispanic whites. To understand how these structural differences impact network structures, I examine network structure effects on network resources by race and class.

## Part II

Network theorists maintain that network structures can influence access to network resources (i.e., the resources embedded in the network structure). Both Granovetter (1973) and Wilson (1992) argue that wide-ranging network structures promote access to such instrumental resources as job information. Combining Granovetter’s and Wilson’s argument, Hurlbert et al. (2008) examine how two dimensions of resource element of network capital

(i.e., access to instrumental resources and access to mainstream resources) affect economic outcomes . I expand this argument by (a) including latent supportive resources as a network capital resource and (b) by examining noneconomic outcomes (i.e., health). Therefore, part II of this chapter examines how the structure element of network capital influences (1) access to instrumental resources, (2) access to mainstream individuals and (3) access to latent supportive resources by race and class.

### The Resource Element of Network Capital

Exploring the Resource Element of Network Capital (Instrumental Resources), by Class. I begin by examining how the structure element of network capital and individual-level factors affect access to the resource element by *class* (see Tables 5.9 and 5.10). Comparisons of the resource element of network capital *by class* begin with working/lower-class individuals (Table 5.9). Older, working/lower-class individuals describe having more network members who are homeowners than younger working/lower-class individuals do. I find that working/lower-class individuals who describe more age diversity in their network structures also report more access to network members who own a car.

Turning to middle-class individuals and access to instrumental resources (Table 5.10), like older working/lower-class individuals, older middle-class individuals describe having more access to network members who are homeowners than younger middle-class individuals do. Married, middle-class individuals also describe having more access to network members who own their homes and who own their cars than unmarried individuals do. In addition, middle-class individuals who describe less age diversity in their network structures describe more access to network members who are homeowners.



Exploring the Resource Element of Network Capital (Instrumental Resources), by Race.

I now ask how the structure element of network capital and individual-level factors affect access to the resource element of network capital, examining this separately by race (Table 5.11 and Table 12). Starting with whites (Table 5.11), three dimensions of the structure element of network capital affect access to instrumental resources: race diversity, age diversity, and gender diversity. I find that whites who report less race diversity have greater access to network members who are homeowners. This finding suggests that, for whites, less race diversity promotes access to instrumental resources. According to Lin (2000), nonwhites are disproportionately poorer in instrumental resources compared to their white counterparts; thus, for whites having racial diversity in their network structures might decrease access to instrumental resources. In addition, whites who report less age diversity in their network structures also report more access to individuals who have access to a home phone. I also find that whites who describe greater gender diversity in their network structures also describe having more access to network members who have a car. Four individual-level factors affect whites' access to instrumental resources: age, marital status, sex, and social class. Older whites describe greater access to network members who are homeowners than younger whites do. I also find that married, white individuals describe more access to network members who are homeowners than unmarried whites do.

I now move to how the structure element of network capital and individual-level factors affect access to the resource element for blacks (Table 5.12). Starting with network structure effects on network resources: I find that network structures that have less density (i.e., a greater proportion of stronger ties) promote access to instrumental resources (i.e., network members who own cars).

**Table 5.9. Ordinary Least Square Regressions the (Instrumental) Resources of Network Capital, for Working/Lower-class**

	Homeowners		Car Owner		Home Phone	
Working/lower-class Individuals						
	Coefficient	S.E.	Coefficient	S.E.	Coefficient	S.E.
<b>Intercept</b>	-.237	.153	.915	.121	1.022	.076
<b>Density</b>	.042	.133	-.198	.105	-.103	.066
<b>Network Size</b>	.012	.022	.010	.018	.003	.011
<b>Diversity</b>						
<b>Gender Diversity</b>	.062	.069	.047	.055	.021	.034
<b>Age Diversity</b>	.005	.004	.007*	.003	.001	.002
<b>Race Diversity</b>	-.055	.135	-.024	.107	.033	.067
<b>Individual Characteristics</b>						
<b>Sex (male)</b>	.056	.056	.076	.044	-.046	.028
<b>Married (yes)</b>	.023	.056	.019	.045	.030	.028
<b>Household Size</b>	-.010	.012	-.011	.009	-.003	.006
<b>Age</b>	.013***	.002	-.001	.002	.000	.001
<b>Social Group</b>						
<b>Race (White)</b>	.045	.056	.022	.044	.035	.028
	N=186; R <sup>2</sup> =.299		N=186; R <sup>2</sup> = .081		N=186; R <sup>2</sup> =.069	
<b>* p ≤ .05; ** p &lt; .01; ***p&lt;.000</b>						

<b>Table 5.10 Ordinary Least Square Regressions Resource Element (Instrumental) of Network Capital, for Middle-class</b>						
	<b>Homeowners</b>		<b>Car Owner</b>		<b>Home Phone</b>	
<b>Middle-Class Individuals</b>						
	Coefficient	S.E.	Coefficient	S.E.	Coefficient	S.E.
<b>Intercept</b>	.200	.162	.958	.058	.990	.015
<b>Density</b>	.141	.120	.007	.043	.015	.011
<b>Network Size</b>	.007	.013	-.002	.005	.000	.001
<b>Diversity</b>						
<b>Gender Diversity</b>	-.009	.058	-.032	.021	-.007	.006
<b>Age Diversity</b>	-.008*	.004	.000	.001	.000	.000
<b>Race Diversity</b>	-.120	.104	.006	.037	.015	.010
<b>Individual Characteristics</b>						
<b>Sex (male)</b>	-.084	.050	.026	.018	-.003	.005
<b>Married (yes)</b>	.155**	.053	.036*	.019	.000	.005
<b>Household Size</b>	-.025	.017	-.002	.006	-.005*	.002
<b>Age</b>	.010***	.002	.000	.001	.000	.000
<b>Social Group</b>						
<b>Race (White)</b>	-.040	.054	.016	.019	-.003	.005
	N=173; R <sup>2</sup> =.277		N=173; R <sup>2</sup> =.065		N= 173; R <sup>2</sup> =.112	
<b>* p ≤ .05; ** p &lt; .01; ***p&lt;.000</b>						

**Table 5.11.: Ordinary Least Square Regressions of the Resource Element of Network Capital, for Whites**

Whites	Homeowners		Car Owner		Home Phone	
	Coefficient	S.E.	Coefficient	S.E.	Coefficient	S.E.
<b>Intercept</b>	-.124	.137	.776	.074	.997	.034
<b>Density</b>	.257*	.116	-.009	.062	.003	.028
<b>Network Size</b>	.009	.014	.001	.007	.003	.003
<b>Diversity</b>						
<b>Gender Diversity</b>	.013	.062	.071*	.034	.006	.015
<b>Age Diversity</b>	-.002	.004	.001	.002	-.002*	.001
<b>Race Diversity</b>	-.303**	.105	.016	.056	.007	.026
<b>Individual Characteristics</b>						
<b>Sex (male)</b>	-.027	.048	.089**	.026	.009	.012
<b>Married (yes)</b>	.107*	.052	.025	.028	.003	.013
<b>Household Size</b>	-.012	.014	-.004	.008	-.003	.004
<b>Age</b>	.010***	.002	.000	.001	.000	.000
<b>Social Group</b>						
<b>Class (middle-class)</b>	.097*	.051	.096**	.027	.009	.012
	N=198; R <sup>2</sup> =.308		N= 198; R <sup>2</sup> =.145		N= 198; R <sup>2</sup> =.048	

\* p ≤ .05; \*\* p < .01; \*\*\*p<.000

**Table 5.12.: Ordinary Least Square Regressions for the (Instrumental) Resource Element of Network Capital, for Blacks**

Blacks	Homeowners		Car Owner		Home Phone	
	Model 1A		Model 1B		Model 1C	
	Coefficient	S.E.	Coefficient	S.E.	Coefficient	S.E.
<b>Intercept</b>	-.094	.173	1.138	.133	1.076	.086
<b>Density</b>	-.054	.142	-.244*	.110	-.127	.071
<b>Network Size</b>	-.001	.021	-.009	.017	-.010	.011
<b>Diversity</b>						
<b>Gender Diversity</b>	.074	.066	-.028	.051	.030	.033
<b>Age Diversity</b>	-.001	.004	.006	.003	.003	.002
<b>Race Diversity</b>	.248	.144	-.086	.111	.032	.072
<b>Individual Characteristics</b>						
<b>Sex (male)</b>	-.012	.061	.004	.047	-.073*	.030
<b>Married (yes)</b>	.043	.057	.042	.044	.031	.029
<b>Household Size</b>	-.011	.012	-.018	.010	-.007	.006
<b>Age</b>	.013**	.002	-.003	.002	.001	.001
<b>Social Group</b>						
<b>Class (middle)</b>	.168**	.060	.137**	.046	.052+	.030
	N= 161; R <sup>2</sup> =.346		N= 161; R <sup>2</sup> =.114		N= 161; R <sup>2</sup> =.111	

\* p ≤ .05; \*\* p < .01; \*\*\*p<.000;

+ p ≤ .05; ++ p < .01; +++p<.000 (one tailed)

I also find individual-level effects on the resource element of network capital. The effects of age on access to network members who are homeowners are similar for blacks and whites. Thus like older, white individuals, older blacks describe more access to network members who are homeowners. In addition, black women describe more access to network members who have a phone than black men do. For blacks, class significantly affects blacks' access to network members who (a) own their car(s), (b) own their homes and (c) and have a working telephone. Middle-class blacks describe more access to network members who own their cars, homes, and have working telephones compared to working/lower-class blacks. This finding lends support to my research prediction (H<sub>6</sub>) which states: *because of the low-ranging networks that poorer individuals are embedded, they will report less access to instrumental resources.*

Exploring the Resource Element of Network Capital (Access to Latent Supportive Resources), by Class. I now ask what network structures and individual-level factors affect access to latent supportive resources, by class (Tables 5.13 and 5.14). Among working/lower-class individuals (table 5.13), two dimensions of the structure element of network capital significantly affect access to the resource element of network capital: network density and network size. Network structures that have greater network density (contain a greater proportion of stronger ties) promote access to latent supportive resources; compared to network structures that of lower density (greater proportion of weak ties). This finding is consistent with my prediction that: **(H<sub>1</sub>)** *network structures that have higher levels of density (higher proportions of strong ties) are more likely to promote access to latent supportive resources than network structures that have lower levels of network density.* I also find that larger network structures promote access to latent supportive resources. This finding is

consistent with the Durkheim argument; larger network structures promote social integration. In addition, only one individual-level factor affects access to latent supportive resources: sex. Females tend to report more access to latent supportive resources than males do.

Among middle-class individuals (table 5.14), I find the same network structure effect on access to latent supportive resources. That is, larger network structures promote expressive action than smaller network structures do. This network structure effect on latent supportive resources is consistent among both middle- and working/lower-class individuals. In addition, I find race effects on access to latent supportive resources: middle-class blacks report more access to latent supportive resources than middle-class whites do. In addition, younger individuals report more access to latent supportive resources than older individuals do. I also find that individuals with smaller households describe more access to latent supportive resources.

Exploring the Resource Element of Network Capital (Access to Latent Supportive Resources), by Race. Turning to race differences in access to the resource element of network capital, I begin with network structure and individual-level effects on the resource element of network capital for blacks (Table 5.15). Blacks with larger network structures describe more access to latent supportive resources than blacks with smaller network structures. This finding is consistent with my research prediction: **(H<sub>2</sub>)** *Larger network structures promote access to latent supportive resources than larger network structures.* In addition, blacks who describe network structures that have greater density (i.e., increased proportions of stronger ties) also describe more access to expressive resources. This finding is consistent with my prediction that: **(H<sub>1</sub>)** *network structures that have higher levels of density (higher proportions*

*of strong ties) are more likely to promote access to latent supportive resources than network structures that have lower levels of network density*

I also find individual-level effects on latent supportive resources. Black middle-class individuals describe greater access to latent supportive resources than black working/lower-class individuals do. This finding is consistent with my research prediction (H<sub>8</sub>) which states that *poorer individuals tend to perceive inadequate levels of social support*.

Moving to whites (table 5.16), similar to the network structure effects of blacks, whites who describe larger networks report greater access to latent supportive resources than blacks who describe smaller networks do. It is important to note that I find similar network size effects across social strata. That is, larger network structures promote access to latent supportive resources regardless of race and class. I also find that unmarried, white individuals report more access to individual resources than married, white individuals do.

Exploring the Resource Element of Network Capital (Access to Mainstream Individuals), by Class. I start with class differences and access to mainstream individuals (Tables 5.17 and 5.18); race is the only factor that affects access to mainstream individuals across class. Table 5.17 presents results for working/lower-class individuals and access to mainstream individuals (i.e., access to individuals with higher levels of education): I find that working/lower-class whites have greater access to mainstream individuals than working/lower-class blacks do. Interestingly, I also find that middle-class whites have greater access to mainstream individuals than middle-class blacks do. For middle-class individuals (Table 5.18), middle-class whites report more access to mainstream individuals (i.e., access to individuals with higher levels of education).



Exploring the Resource Element of Network Capital (Access to Mainstream Individuals, by Race. I now move to race differences (see Tables 5.19 and 5.20) and access to mainstream resources. I start with blacks (Table 5.19): consistent with my prediction, I find that (H<sub>6</sub>) *because of the network structures that poorer individuals are embedded, they should report lower levels of instrumental resources (i.e., mainstream individuals).* That is, middle-class blacks report more access to mainstream individuals, compared to their less affluent, black counterparts. Class has similar effects on access to mainstream individuals for blacks and whites. I find that middle-class blacks report more access to mainstream individuals than working/lower-class blacks do. I also find individual-level effects on access to mainstream individuals: married blacks describe greater access to mainstream individuals than unmarried blacks do.

For whites (Table 5.20), I only find class effects on access to mainstream individuals (i.e., access to individuals with higher levels of education). Similar to blacks, middle-class whites have more access to mainstream individuals than lower-class whites do. In sum, social scientists have recognized that social networks can serve as channels through which social resources can flow. Hurlbert et al. (2008) argue that both the structure and resources dimensions of network capital are critical to understanding how social resources are unevenly distributed throughout society. Furthermore, researchers recognize that variations in network capital create differences in access to social resources across social groups. In this chapter, I focused on race and class differences in the structure element of network capital. However I find that race exerts significant effects particularly among poor blacks' network capital. I find that the network structures of poor blacks tend to be more socially isolating (i.e., smaller network structures, less gender and race diversity) than poor whites. To explain

this variation, I draw on Massey’s and Denton’s work (1993). Massey and Denton (1993) argue that residential segregation by race and economic resources concentrates poor blacks into neighborhoods which creates “harsh and extremely disadvantaged environments” in which “a set of behaviors, attitudes and expectations that are sharply at variance with those common in the rest of American society” (Massey and Denton 1993). I now ask how network capital differences affect perceptions of social support adequacy by race and class.

<b>Table 5.13.: Ordinary Least Square Regression for the Resource Element (Latent Supportive Resources) of Network Capital, for Working/lower-class</b>		
<b>Working/lower-class</b>	<b>Latent Supportive Resources</b>	
	<b>Coefficient</b>	<b>S.E.</b>
<b>Intercept</b>	-.492	.354
<b>Density</b>	1.052**	.307
<b>Network Size</b>	.232***	.051
<b>Diversity</b>		
<b>Gender Diversity</b>	.035	.160
<b>Age Diversity</b>	.002	.010
<b>Race Diversity</b>	-.152	.312
<b>Individual Characteristics</b>		
<b>Sex (male)</b>	-.359**	.130
<b>Married (yes)</b>	-.144	.130
<b>Household Size</b>	-.024	.027
<b>Age</b>	-.007	.004
<b>Social Group</b>		
<b>Race (white)</b>	-.006	.129
<b>N= 185; R=.218</b>		
<b>* p ≤ .05; ** p &lt; .01; ***p&lt;.000</b>		

<b>Table 5.14.: Ordinary Least Square Regressions the Resource Element (Latent Supportive Resource) of Network Capital, for Middle-Class</b>		
	<b>Latent Supportive Resources</b>	
<b>Middle-Class Individuals</b>		
	<b>Coefficient</b>	<b>S.E.</b>
<b>Intercept</b>	1.485	.550
<b>Density</b>	-.211	.407
<b>Network Size</b>	.198***	.044
<b>Diversity</b>		
<b>Gender Diversity</b>	.060	.198
<b>Age Diversity</b>	.009	.013
<b>Race Diversity</b>	.313	.353
<b>Individual Characteristics</b>		
<b>Sex (male)</b>	-.098	.169
<b>Married (yes)</b>	-.171	.180
<b>Household Size</b>	-.134**	.056
<b>Age</b>	-.013**	.006
<b>Social Group</b>		
<b>Race (white)</b>	-.554**	.183
<b>R=.220; N= 173</b>		
<b>* p ≤ .05; ** p &lt; .01; ***p&lt;.000</b>		

<b>Table 5.15.: Ordinary Least Square Regressions for Network Capital (Latent supportive resources), for Blacks</b>		
<b>Blacks</b>	<b>Expressive Action</b>	
	<b>Coefficient</b>	<b>S.E.</b>
<b>Intercept</b>	-.312	.434
<b>Density</b>	.766**	.358
<b>Network Size</b>	.245***	.054
<b>Diversity</b>		
<b>Gender Diversity</b>	.047	.165
<b>Age Diversity</b>	.005	.011
<b>Race Diversity</b>	-.411	.360
<b>Individual Characteristics</b>		
<b>Sex (male)</b>	-.187	.152
<b>Married (yes)</b>	-.018	.144
<b>Household Size</b>	-.033	.031
<b>Age</b>	-.009	.005
<b>Social Group</b>		
<b>Class (middle)</b>	.403**	.151

**N= 161; R<sup>2</sup>=.255 ;\* p ≤ .05; \*\* p < .01; \*\*\*p<.000**

**Table 5.16.: Ordinary Least Square Regressions of the Network Capital (Latent supportive resources), for Whites**

Whites	Expressive Action	
	Coefficient	S.E.
<b>Intercept</b>	.288	.420
<b>Density</b>	.281	.355
<b>Network Size</b>	.204***	.042
<b>Diversity</b>		
<b>Gender Diversity</b>	-.003	.191
<b>Age Diversity</b>	.008	.011
<b>Race Diversity</b>	.415	.323
<b>Individual Characteristics</b>		
<b>Sex (male)</b>	-.278	.149
<b>Married (yes)</b>	-.336*	.159
<b>Household Size</b>	-.064	.044
<b>Age</b>	-.008	.005
<b>Social Group</b>		
<b>Class (middle)</b>	.012	.156
<b>N=198; R<sup>2</sup>=.192</b>		
<b>* p ≤ .05; ** p &lt; .01; ***p&lt;.000</b>		

<b>Table 5.17.: Ordinary Least Square Regressions of Mainstream Individuals of Network Capital, for Working/lower-class</b>		
<b>Working/lower-class</b>	<b>Mainstream Individuals</b>	
	Coefficient	S.E.
<b>Intercept</b>	12.239	1.141
<b>Density</b>	-.213	1.004
<b>Network Size</b>	.197	.162
<b>Diversity</b>		
<b>Gender Diversity</b>	.552	.512
<b>Age Diversity</b>	-.031	.031
<b>Race Diversity</b>	-.209	.981
<b>Individual Characteristics</b>		
<b>Sex (male)</b>	.359	.416
<b>Married (yes)</b>	.679	.415
<b>Household Size</b>	-.110	.087
<b>Age</b>	.007	.014
<b>Social Group</b>		
<b>Race (white)</b>	1.676***	.414
<b>N= 179; R<sup>2</sup>=.177</b>		
<b>* p ≤ .05; ** p &lt; .01; ***p&lt;.000</b>		

**Table 5.18.: Ordinary Least Squares Regression of Mainstream Individuals of Network Capital, for Middle-Class**

<b>Table 5.18.: Ordinary Least Squares Regression of Mainstream Individuals of Network Capital, for Middle-Class</b>		
	<b>Mainstream Individuals</b>	
<b>Middle-Class</b>	<b>Model 1A</b>	
	<b>Coefficient</b>	<b>S.E.</b>
<b>Intercept</b>	13.924	1.053
<b>Density</b>	-.301	.780
<b>Network Size</b>	-.102	.084
<b>Diversity</b>		
<b>Gender Diversity</b>	.510	.379
<b>Age Diversity</b>	.019	.025
<b>Race Diversity</b>	.676	.676
<b>Individual Characteristics</b>		
<b>Sex (male)</b>	.124	.323
<b>Married (yes)</b>	.621	.345
<b>Household Size</b>	.100	.107
<b>Age</b>	.006	.012
<b>Social Group</b>		
<b>Race (white)</b>	1.292***	.350
N= 173; R <sup>2</sup> =.127		
* p ≤ .05; ** p < .01; ***p<.000		

<b>Table 5.19.: Ordinary Least Squares Regression of Mainstream Individuals of Network Capital, for Blacks</b>		
<b>Whites</b>	<b>Mainstream Individuals</b>	
	<b>Model 1A</b>	
	<b>Coefficient</b>	<b>S.E.</b>
<b>Intercept</b>	11.923	1.292
<b>Density</b>	-.167	1.064
<b>Network Size</b>	.128	.159
<b>Diversity</b>		
<b>Gender Diversity</b>	.363	.489
<b>Age Diversity</b>	.011	.033
<b>Race Diversity</b>	-.417	1.061
<b>Individual Characteristics</b>		
<b>Sex (male)</b>	.115	.454
<b>Married (yes)</b>	.843*	.428
<b>Household Size</b>	-.007	.093
<b>Age</b>	.004	.015
<b>Social Group</b>		
<b>Class (middle)</b>	1.660***	.446
<b>N= 157; R<sup>2</sup>=.146</b>		
<b>* p ≤ .05; ** p &lt; .01; ***p&lt;.000</b>		



**Table 5.20.: Ordinary Least Square Regressions for Mainstream Individuals of Network Capital, for Whites**

Blacks	Mainstream Individuals	
	Coefficient	S.E.
<b>Intercept</b>	14.733	.932
<b>Density</b>	-.526	.788
<b>Network Size</b>	-.025	.091
<b>Diversity</b>		
<b>Gender Diversity</b>	.787	.414
<b>Age Diversity</b>	-.027	.025
<b>Race Diversity</b>	.496	.692
<b>Individual Characteristics</b>		
<b>Sex (male)</b>	.466	.324
<b>Married (yes)</b>	.589	.346
<b>Household Size</b>	-.149	.097
<b>Age</b>	.005	.012
<b>Social Group</b>		
<b>Class (middle)</b>	1.124***	.339
<b>N=195; R<sup>2</sup>=.148</b>		
<b>* p ≤ .05; ** p &lt; .01; ***p&lt;.000</b>		

## CHAPTER 6: PERCEIVED ADEQUACY OF SOCIAL SUPPORT

### Introduction

Social support is a resource that can mitigate the pernicious effects of stressful life events. Although the literature has documented that fact clearly (Thoits 1982; Cassel 1976; Cobb 1976; Vaux 1988; House 1987), surprisingly little is known about certain aspects of *social distributions* of social support. The social support and health literatures focus almost exclusively on (a) the quantity and quality of the social support (i.e., Cassel 1976; Cobb 1976; and Kaplan 1974) and (b) whether or not social support buffers the effects of stress on health mechanisms during trying times (i.e., Thoits 1995; Cohen and Wills 1985; and House 1987).

Social network theorists maintain that social networks work to constrain/facilitate access to social resources (i.e., social support). Furthermore, some groups are differentially embedded in certain network structures (Wilson 1992; Granovetter 1973) that promote or restrict the flow of social support. Thus, advancing the social support strand of network analysis is a critical component to understanding the social distributions of social support (Hurlbert et al. 2008; House 1987; Lin 2000). That is, integrating network capital -- the structure element and the resource element -- into social support research provides insight into the uneven distributions of social support across social groups. Therefore, this chapter investigates social network effects on the unequal distribution of social support across race and class.

Specifically, this chapter asks (a) which race and class groups report higher perception of social support adequacy (b) and how the structure and resource element of network capital perceptions of social support adequacy, by class and race. Using independent samples t-test, **Part I** of this chapter examines the unequal distributions of perceived adequacy of

instrumental and expressive social support. Using ordinary least squares, **Part II** of this chapter investigates how the social support process differs by race and class.

Part I

Independent Samples T-test

Class. Assessments of social support *by class* begin with individuals' perceptions of adequacy of instrumental and expressive social support. Table 6.1 presents the mean differences between middle- and working/lower-class individuals' perceptions of instrumental and expressive social support. I find that middle-class individuals perceive having greater adequacy of instrumental social support (M=3.500; SD=.747) than working/lower-class individuals (M=3.13; SD=.897) do.

Eta-squared<sup>21</sup> measures, which assess the magnitude of the mean difference between middle- and working/lower-class individuals show a modest mean difference between middle- and working/lower-class individuals a modest (eta-squared = .04). I also find that middle-class individuals perceive they have greater adequacy of expressive social support (M= 3.72; SD=3.44) than working/lower-class individuals do. The magnitude of the mean difference between the two groups is also small to moderate (eta-squared =.04).

<b>Table 6.1. Independent Samples T-tests for Adequacy of Social Support, by Class</b>				
	Middle-class	N	Working/lower-class	N
<b>Perceived Instrumental Social Support***</b>	3.500	254	3.133	314
<b>Perceived Expressive Social Support***</b>	3.728	254	3.442	312
* p ≤ .05; ** p < .01; ***p<.000				

Race. To understand better how perceptions of adequacy of social support vary by race, I evaluate the mean differences in perceived of adequacy of social support between

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<sup>21</sup> See chapter 4 for information on eta-squared measures.

blacks and whites (see Table 6.2). Both measures of social support perceptions differ significantly between blacks and whites. Whites have significantly higher perceptions of access to instrumental (M= 3.500; SD=.740) and expressive social support (M= 3.679; SD=.586), compared to blacks' perceptions of instrumental (M= 3.434; SD= .816) and expressive social support (M= 3.04; SD= .918).

	Whites	N	Blacks	N
<b>Perceived Instrumental Social Support***</b>	3.500	256	3.046	259
<b>Perceived Expressive Social Support***</b>	3.679	256	3.434	258
<b>* p ≤ .05; ** p &lt; .01; ***p&lt;.000</b>				

Race and Class. To determine whether or not race differences between blacks and whites are reduced when I control for social class, I assess how perceptions of social support differ by race and class (Tables 6.3A and 6.3B). My findings do not support my research predictions (**H<sub>9</sub>**) that state that *race differences in perceptions of social support would attenuate after controlling for class*. In contrast, I find that compared to blacks, whites of all social classes have significantly higher perceptions of instrumental social support compared to blacks.

Starting with working/lower-class individuals (table 6.3A), perceptions of access to instrumental support are higher among working/lower-class whites (M=3.482; SD= .779) than working/lower-class blacks (M=2.955; SD=3.333). The magnitude of the mean difference between working/lower-class whites and blacks was moderate to large (eta-squared = .07). Moving to middle-class individuals (table 6.3B), perceived adequacy of instrumental support is higher among middle-class whites (M= 3.546; SD=.798) than among middle-class blacks (M=3.333; SD= .710). However, the mean difference is small (eta-squared

= .01). Holding class constant, then, I find no significant differences between middle-class whites and blacks perceptions of expressive support.

<b>Table 6.3A. Independent Samples T-Test for the Perceptions of Social Support for Working/Lower-class Blacks and Whites</b>				
	Working/Lower-class Whites	N	Working/Lower-class Blacks	N
<b>Perceived Instrumental Social Support***</b>	3.428	98	2.955	181
<b>Perceived Expressive Social Support</b>	3.540	98	3.361	180
<b>* p ≤ .05; ** p &lt; .01; ***p&lt;.000</b>				

<b>Table 6.3B. Independent Samples T-Test for the Perceptions of Social Support, for Middle-Class Blacks and Whites</b>				
	Middle-Class Whites	N	Middle-Class Blacks	N
<b>Perceived Instrumental Social Support***</b>	3.546	150	3.333	69
<b>Perceived Expressive Social Support</b>	3.760	180	3.652	69
<b>* p ≤ .05; ** p &lt; .01; ***p&lt;.000 ; +p ≤ .05; ++ p &lt; .01; +++p&lt;.000 (one-tailed)</b>				

In sum, there are both race and class differences in perceived adequacy of social support. That is, race effects remain after controlling for class. Interestingly, I *only* find significant race (see Table 6.3) differences in perceptions of *instrumental* support. I now ask (a) how network capital affects access to social support. Then, I ask how the support process differs by race and class.

Part II

Perceived Adequacy of Social Support

Instrumental Social Support. To assess how network capital affects access to social support, I ask how the structure and resource elements of network capital affect individuals'

perceptions of social support (table 6.4). I begin with perceptions of instrumental social support. Two dimensions of the structure element of network capital – network size and network diversity – affect individuals’ perceived adequacy to instrumental social support. I find that network structures that are larger and have greater racial diversity increase individuals’ perceived adequacy to instrumental social support. The network size effect is consistent with observations that larger network structures promote social integration. In addition, I find network structures with race diversity increase access to instrumental resources. I also find that individuals in social networks with less gender diversity report more adequate instrumental social support. Because women and men provide different types of support, the effects of gender diversity effects might differ depending on the measurement used<sup>22</sup>(Hurlbert et al. 2000). Given the instrumental support measure used (i.e., childcare, borrowing money), this finding is not surprising. Only one dimension of the resource element of network capital significantly affects individuals’ perceived adequacy instrumental social support: having access to network members who have working vehicles increases individuals’ perceived adequacy of instrumental social support.

Expressive Social Support. Turning to the question of how network capital affects individuals’ perceived adequacy of access to expressive social support; I assess how the structure and resource element of network capital affect individuals’ perceived adequacy of social support (see Table 6.5). Two measures of the structure element of network capital, network density and network size, affect individuals’ perceived adequacy of expressive social

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<sup>22</sup> Studies of gender differences in support transactions suggest that women provide more support. Thus, being embedded in network structures that consist mostly of men might have negative effect on perceptions of instrumental social support. In contrast, network structures that consist mostly of women might increase one’s perception of instrumental support (see Hurlbert et al. 2000; Wellman and Wortley 1990).

**Table 6.4. Ordinary Least Squares Regression for Network Capital on Adequacy of Instrumental Social Support**

	Coefficients (B)	Std. Error
Intercept	2.111	.397
<b>The Structure Element of Network Capital</b>		
Density	.313	.197
Network Size	.071**	.027
<b>Diversity</b>		
Race Diversity	.411**	.177
Gender Diversity	-.205**	.098
Age Diversity	-.003	.006
<b>The Resource Element of Network Capital</b>		
Home owner	-.022	.108
Car owner	.545**	.194
Home phone	.086	.344
Latent supportive resources	.004	.042
<b>Mainstream Individuals</b>		
Education	.020	.016
N= 424; R <sup>2</sup> = .075		
* p ≤ .05; ** p < .01; ***p<.000		

**Table 6.5. Ordinary Least Squares for Network Capital on Adequacy of Expressive Social Support**

Independent Variables	Coefficients (B)	Std. Error
Intercept	2.513	.316
<b>The Structure Element of Network Capital</b>		
Density	.351*	.157
Network Size	.040+	.021
<b>Diversity</b>		
Race Diversity	-.020	.141
Gender Diversity	-.064	.078
Age Diversity	-.008	.005
<b>The Resource Element of Network Capital</b>		
Home owner	.237**	.086
Car owner	.238	.154
Home phone	.040	.273
Latent supportive resources	.011	.034
<b>Mainstream Individuals</b>		
Education	.029**	.013
N=423; R <sup>2</sup> =.084 ; * p ≤ .05; ** p < .01; ***p<.000		

support. Individuals who report network structures with higher levels of density have greater perceived adequacy to expressive social support. This finding supports my research prediction which states that (**H<sub>1</sub>**) *network structures with a higher proportion of strong ties promote access to social support*. In addition individuals with larger network structures have higher perceptions of expressive social support. I also find that two dimensions of the resource element of network capital affect individuals' perceived adequacy to expressive social support. Individuals who describe having more access to network members who are homeowners have increased perceptions of access to expressive social support. In addition, individuals whose networks contain higher proportions of mainstream individuals (i.e., more network members who have higher levels of education) have increased perceptions of adequacy to expressive social support.

#### Perceived Adequacy of Instrumental Social Support, by Class

Instrumental Support Adequacy. I now move to the question of how network capital affects perceptions of adequacy of social support *by class*. Starting with working/lower-class individuals' perceived adequacy of instrumental social support (see Table 6.6), I find that two measures of the structure element of network capital, network density and network diversity, affect working/lower-class individuals' perceptions of social support: Working/lower-class individuals who are embedded in social networks of greater network density (i.e., a higher proportion of strong ties) in their network structures have greater perceived adequacy of instrumental social support (i.e., enough people to help them) than their working/lower-class individuals with wider-ranging (i.e., weaker ties) network structures. I also find that lack of gender diversity in working/lower-class individuals network structures increase their perceptions of access to instrumental support. For the resource element of network capital, I



find that only one dimension affects working/lower-class individuals' perceived adequacy of instrumental social support. Working/lower-class individuals who have access to network members who own their car have increased perceptions of adequacy to instrumental support. Finally, I find that working/lower-class whites and blacks significantly differ in their perceptions of social support. I find that working/lower-class whites have greater perceptions of adequacy to social support than working/lower-class blacks do.

#### Perceived Adequacy of Expressive Social Support, by Class

Middle-class and Expressive Support Adequacy. I move to middle-class effects on expressive support adequacy (table 6.9), I find older, middle-class individuals report increased perceptions of adequate expressive social support than younger individuals do. I also find that married individuals have increased perceptions of adequate expressive social support than unmarried individuals do.

#### Perceived Adequacy of Social Support, by Race

Blacks and Instrumental Support Adequacy. To understand better the effects of network capital effects on instrumental social support by race (see Table 6.10), I assess differences between blacks' and whites' perceptions social support adequacy. Starting with blacks' and perceived of adequacy instrumental social support, I find three dimensions of the structure element of network capital exert significant effects. Consistent with my findings for working/lower-class individuals, blacks who are embedded in network structures that contain a higher proportion of strong ties (i.e., network of greater density) also have greater perceived adequacy of instrumental social support. Among blacks, being embedded in a network of greater racial diversity also increases perceptions of instrumental social support. Lin (2000) argued that, because nonwhites are disproportionately poorer and more

disadvantaged in their social resource, social isolation from whites can contribute to their poor social capital. Although Lin's research investigates the positive effects of racial diversity on instrumental outcomes (i.e., jobs and access to education), my findings are similar. Racial diversity, for blacks, also increases blacks' perceptions of instrumental social support. I also find that less gender diversity in blacks' network structures increase blacks' perceptions of adequate instrumental social support. Turning to network resources effects on perceptions of social support, I find that having access to network members who are car owners increase individuals' perceptions to social support.

Blacks and Expressive Adequacy. I now move to how network structures and individual-level factors affect expressive support adequacy (table 6.11). For blacks, I only find age effects on expressive support adequacy: Older individuals report increase perceptions of expressive support adequacy than younger individuals do.

Whites and Instrumental Support Adequacy. Moving to network capital effects on instrumental support among whites (Table 6.12), I find that being embedded in a larger network structure increase whites' perceptions adequate social support. Thus, for both blacks and whites, individuals with larger network structures have greater perceptions of adequate instrumental social support. I also find that whites who describe themselves as healthy report greater perceptions of adequate instrumental social support.

Whites and Expressive Support. Turning to perceptions of expressive social support among whites (Table 6.13), I find individuals embedded in larger network structures have greater perceived expressive social support. This finding is consistent with Durkheimien theory, which suggests that larger network structures promote social integration. I also find that individuals embedded in network structures with less age diversity have greater

perceived expressive social support. Whites who perceive themselves as healthier also describe greater access to expressive social support, compared to whites who perceive themselves as less healthy.

In sum, I find difference in the support process by race and class. More importantly, I find that poor blacks tend to have increased perceptions of inadequate levels of instrumental social support. Revisiting Massey's and Denton's (1993) work on residential segregation, poor blacks tend to be embedded in environments that social resources are scarce. Furthermore, these segregated environments concentrate conditions "such as drug use, joblessness, welfare dependency, teenage childbearing and unwed parenthood" (Massey and Denton 1993: 667), producing increased levels of stress. Taken together, limited access to resources and increased stressful life events – might negatively affect one's perceptions of instrumental support adequacy.

**Table 6.6. Ordinary Least Squares Regression for Network Capital on Adequacy of Instrumental Social Support, by For Working Class**

<b>Working/Lower-class Individuals</b>		
	<b>Coefficients (B)</b>	<b>Std. Error</b>
<b>Intercept</b>	1.641	.592
<b>The Structure Element of Network Capital</b>		
Density	.833**	.334
Network Size	.088	.054
<b>Diversity</b>		
Race Diversity	.497	.312
Gender Diversity	-.431**	.162
Age Diversity	-.006	.010
<b>The Resource Element of Network Capital</b>		
Home owner (yes)	-.183	.185
Car owner (yes)	.577**	.243
Home phone (yes)	.362	.375
Latent supportive resources	.052	.076
<b>Mainstream Individuals</b>		
Education	-.014	.026
<b>Individuals Characteristics</b>		
Age	.002	.005
Health	.083	.079
Married (yes)	-.191	.133
Sex (male)	.048	.138
Household Size	-.006	.028
Race (white)	.391**	.139
N =179; R <sup>2</sup> =.202		
* p ≤ .05; ** p < .01; ***p<.000		

**Table 6.7. Ordinary Least Squares Regression for Network Capital on Individuals' Perceptions of Instrumental Social Support, by Class**

<b>Middle-Class Individuals</b>		
	<b>Coefficients (B)</b>	<b>Std. Error</b>
<b>Intercept</b>	4.781	2.086
<b>The Structure Element of Network Capital</b>		
Density	-.637*	.294
Network Size	.051	.034
<b>Diversity</b>		
Race Diversity	.357	.256
Gender Diversity	-.096	.144
Age Diversity	-.003	.009
<b>The Resource Element of Network Capital</b>		
Home owner (yes)	-.082	.194
Car owner (yes)	.543	.565
Home phone (yes)	-1.524	2.122
Latent supportive resources	-.062	.058
<b>Mainstream Individuals</b>		
Education	.002	.030
<b>Individuals Characteristics</b>		
Age	.000	.005
Health	.078	.089
Married (yes)	-.122	.135
Sex (male)	.023	.124
Household Size	-.007	.043
Race (white)	.066	.142
N= 178; R <sup>2</sup> =.135		
* p ≤ .05; ** p < .01; ***p<.000		

<b>Table 6.8. Ordinary Least Squares Regression for Network Capital on Adequacy of Expressive Social Support, by Class</b>		
<b>Lower-Class Individuals</b>		
	<b>Coefficients (B)</b>	<b>Std. Error</b>
<b>Intercept</b>	2.117	.510
<b>The Structure Element of Network Capital</b>		
<b>Density</b>	.433	.287
<b>Network Size</b>	.057	.047
<b>Diversity</b>		
<b>Race Diversity</b>	.354	.267
<b>Gender Diversity</b>	-.228	.139
<b>Age Diversity</b>	-.010	.009
<b>The Resource Element of Network Capital</b>		
<b>Home owner (yes)</b>	.101	.159
<b>Car owner (yes)</b>	.248	.208
<b>Home phone (yes)</b>	.170	.322
<b>Latent supportive resources</b>	.055	.065
<b>Mainstream Individuals</b>		
<b>Education</b>	.022	.022
<b>Individuals Characteristics</b>		
<b>Age</b>	.004	.005
<b>Health</b>	.089	.068
<b>Married (yes)</b>	.070	.115
<b>Sex (male)</b>	.087	.119
<b>Household Size</b>	-.029	.024
<b>Race (white)</b>	-.037	.119
<b>N =178; R<sup>2</sup>=.135</b>		
<b>* p ≤ .05; ** p &lt; .01; ***p&lt;.000</b>		

**Table 6.9. Ordinary Least Squares Regression for Network Capital on Adequacy of Expressive Social Support, by Class**

<b>Middle-Class Individuals</b>		
	<b>Coefficients (B)</b>	<b>Std. Error</b>
<b>Intercept</b>	3.498	1.318
<b>The Structure Element of Network Capital</b>		
<b>Density</b>	.336	.186
<b>Network Size</b>	.017	.021
<b>Diversity</b>		
<b>Race Diversity</b>	.060	.162
<b>Gender Diversity</b>	.154	.091
<b>Age Diversity</b>	-.006	.006
<b>The Resource Element of Network Capital</b>		
<b>Home owner (yes)</b>	.106	.122
<b>Car owner (yes)</b>	.540	.357
<b>Home phone (yes)</b>	-1.640	1.340
<b>Latent supportive resources</b>		
<b>Mainstream Individuals</b>		
<b>Education</b>	.022	.019
<b>Individuals Characteristics</b>		
<b>Age</b>	.007**	.003
<b>Health</b>	.082	.056
<b>Married (yes)</b>	-.186*	.085
<b>Sex (male)</b>	.036	.079
<b>Household Size</b>	.035	.027
<b>Race (white)</b>	.011	.090
N =173; R <sup>2</sup> =.146		
* p ≤ .05; ** p < .01; ***p<.000		

<b>Table 6.10. Ordinary Least Square Regression for Network Capital on Individuals' Perceptions of Instrumental Social Support, for Blacks</b>		
<b>Blacks</b>		
	<b>Coefficients (B)</b>	<b>Std. Error</b>
<b>Intercept</b>	1.609	.726
<b>The Structure Element of Network Capital</b>		
<b>Density</b>	.802*	.369
<b>Network Size</b>	.016	.057
<b>Diversity</b>		
<b>Race Diversity</b>	.842*	.360
<b>Gender Diversity</b>	-.316*	.165
<b>Age Diversity</b>	-.005	.011
<b>The Resource Element of Network Capital</b>		
<b>Home owner (yes)</b>	-.039	.211
<b>Car owner (yes)</b>	.766**	.280
<b>Home phone (yes)</b>	.367	.417
<b>Latent supportive resources</b>	.120	.082
<b>Mainstream Individuals</b>		
<b>Education</b>	-.013	.029
<b>Individuals Characteristics</b>		
<b>Age</b>	.003	.006
<b>Health</b>	.046	.087
<b>Married (yes)</b>	-.269	.145
<b>Sex (male)</b>	.048	.155
<b>Household Size</b>	-.004	.032
<b>Class (middle)</b>	.169	.168
<b>N=157; R<sup>2</sup>=.190</b>		
<b>* p ≤ .05; ** p &lt; .01; ***p&lt;.000 ; * p ≤ .05; ** p &lt; .01; ***p&lt;.000</b>		



<b>Table 6.11. Ordinary Least Square Regression for Network Capital on Individuals' Adequacy of Expressive Social Support, for Blacks</b>		
<b>Blacks</b>	<b>Expressive Social Support</b>	
	<b>Coefficients (B)</b>	<b>Std. Error</b>
<b>Intercept</b>	1.797	.577
<b>The Structure Element of Network Capital</b>		
<b>Density</b>	.499	.293
<b>Network Size</b>	.009	.045
<b>Diversity</b>		
<b>Race Diversity</b>	.330	.284
<b>Gender Diversity</b>	-.073	.131
<b>Age Diversity</b>	-.001	.009
<b>The Resource Element of Network Capital</b>		
<b>Home owner (yes)</b>	.164	.167
<b>Car owner (yes)</b>	.171	.221
<b>Home phone (yes)</b>	.030	.329
<b>Latent supportive resources</b>	.074	.065
<b>Mainstream Individuals</b>		
<b>Education</b>	.020	.023
<b>Individuals Characteristics</b>		
<b>Age</b>	.011**	.005
<b>Health</b>	.114	.069
<b>Married (yes)</b>	.006	.115
<b>Sex (male)</b>	.117	.123
<b>Household Size</b>	.000	.025
<b>Class (middle)</b>	-.051	.133
<b>N= 156; R<sup>2</sup>= .158</b>		
<b>* p ≤ .05; ** p &lt; .01; ***p&lt;.000; + p ≤ .05; ++ p &lt; .01; +++p&lt;.000</b>		

<b>Table 6.12. Ordinary Least Square Regression for Network Capital on Individuals' Perceptions of Instrumental Social Support, for Whites</b>		
<b>Whites</b>		
	<b>Coefficients (B)</b>	<b>Std. Error</b>
<b>Intercept</b>	3.174	.770
<b>The Structure Element of Network Capital</b>		
Density	-.285	.270
Network Size	.083*	.033
<b>Diversity</b>		
Race Diversity	.330	.240
Gender Diversity	-.207	.142
Age Diversity	-.003	.009
<b>The Resource Element of Network Capital</b>		
Home owner (yes)	-.148	.176
Car owner (yes)	-.045	.045
Home phone (yes)	.114	.816
Latent supportive resources	-.070	.053
<b>Mainstream Individuals</b>		
Education	-.001	.028
<b>Individuals Characteristics</b>		
Age	-.001	.004
Health	.162*	.079
Married (yes)	-.101	.121
Sex (male)	.087	.114
Household Size	.027	.033
Class (middle)	-.110	.121
N= 195; R <sup>2</sup> =.120		
* p ≤ .05; ** p < .01; ***p<.000 ;+ p ≤ .05; ++ p < .01; +++p<.000		

**Table 6.13. Ordinary Least Square Regressions for Network Capital on Individuals' Adequacy of Expressive Social Support, for Whites**

<b>Intercept</b>	2.140	.577
<b>The Structure Element of Network Capital</b>		
<b>Density</b>	.321	.202
<b>Network Size</b>	.047*	.024
<b>Diversity</b>		
<b>Race Diversity</b>	.053	.180
<b>Gender Diversity</b>	-.052	.107
<b>Age Diversity</b>	-.014*	.006
<b>The Resource Element of Network Capital</b>		
<b>Home owner (yes)</b>	-.035	.132
<b>Car owner (yes)</b>	.458	.271
<b>Home phone (yes)</b>	.245	.611
<b>Latent supportive resources</b>	.005	.040
<b>Mainstream Individuals</b>		
<b>Education</b>	.016	.021
<b>Individuals Characteristics</b>		
<b>Age</b>	.001	.003
<b>Health</b>	.123*	.059
<b>Married (yes)</b>	-.094	.091
<b>Sex (male)</b>	.032	.085
<b>Household Size</b>	-.031	.025
<b>Class (middle)</b>	.027	.091
<b>N= 156; R<sup>2</sup>= .158</b>		
<b>* p ≤ .05; ** p &lt; .01; ***p&lt;.000; + p ≤ .05; ++ p &lt; .01; +++p&lt;.000</b>		

## CHAPTER 7: STRESS, SUPPORT, AND DISTRESS PROCESS

### Introduction

Health theorists recognize the effects stress exerts on physical and mental health (Pearlin 1989; Rahe and Holmes 1967; Kessler and Essex 1982). Sociological interest in stress and health was fueled by an inverse relationship between social class and mental health. That is, working/lower-class individuals displayed higher rates of mental disorders compared to their affluent counterparts (Dohrenwend and Dohrenwend 1976). Since then, contemporary stress theorists maintain that stress and the corresponding effects on health are not randomly distributed throughout society, but rather tends to be concentrated in certain groups (Thoits 1982; Vaux 1988; Dohrenwend 1969; Brown and Harris 1989; Pearlin 1989). From this line of research, several perspectives (e.g., vulnerability, exposure, and social support) have been formulated to address the differential distribution of stress and mental health across social groups. Two basic processes exist to address the variations in stress and health: the vulnerability perspective and the exposure perspective.

Supporters of the *exposure perspective* argue that some groups experience increased exposure to stressful life events (Brown and Harris 1989; Pearlin 1975; Dohrenwend 1973) and, in turn, tend to encounter higher levels of distress. However, critics of the exposure perspective argue that exposure alone cannot explain the differential distributions of stressful life events. Thus, researchers question whether some groups are more *vulnerable* to the pernicious effects of stress. Thoits (1982), further argued that, because certain groups lack the coping resources that serve to mitigate the harmful effects of life's stressors, their health is more vulnerable to the harmful effects of stress.

Among health studies is social support research. Social support research shows an inverse relationship between stress and mental health. In a review of the literature, Kessler and Mcleod (1984) concluded that the negative effects of stress on mental health (i.e., distress) are buffered by perceived emotional social support. Thus, social groups with adequate levels of perceived emotional support have lower levels of psychological distress. In contrast, social groups with inadequate levels of perceived emotional social support have higher levels of psychological distress.

Network theorists expanded this argument, incorporating social networks into the stress-distress process as an essential feature in understanding the differential distribution of social support, and in turn stress, and health across social groups. Hurlbert et al. (2008) maintain that differences in the structure/resources dimensions of network capital can affect access to social resources (i.e., social support) and, in turn, such outcomes and mental health (Hurlbert et al. 2008; Granovetter 1974, 1973; Wilson 1992; Lin 2000).

Therefore, the final stages of my analyses examine race and class differences in the in the stress-support-distress process. Particularly, this chapter asks (1) which groups have increased exposure to stressful life events and (2) how the stress-support-distress process differs by race and class. Using independent sample t-tests, Part I of this chapter assesses whether some groups (i.e., race /or social classes) experience increased exposure to stressful life events. Using ordinary least squares, Part II examines whether the stress-support-distress process differs by race and class. In Part III, I assess how the stress-support-distress process differentially affects race and social classes.

## Part I

### Stress

Class. Some theorists maintain that, because of working/lower-class individuals' disadvantaged position (i.e., lack of resources and opportunities) in the social structure; they tend to have increased exposure to life's stressors. I begin to assess this argument by investigating differences in exposure to stress *by class*. Table 7.1 presents stress exposure differences between middle- and working/lower-class individuals. Consistent with ethnographic literature (Pearlin 1989; Brown and Harris 1989; Dohrenwend and Dohrenwend 1976; Kessler and Neighbors 1986; Thoits 1982), I find that **(H<sub>7</sub>)** *working/lower-class individuals report more exposure to stressful life events than middle-class individuals do*. To assess the magnitude of the mean difference, I calculate eta-squared measures. For exposure to stress disparities between lower-class (M= 1.015; SD=1.037) and middle-class (M=.812; SD=.980) individuals, the mean differences is small (eta-squared= .01).

	Middle-class	N	Working/Lower- Class	N
<b>Stressful Life Events**</b>	.812	256	1.015	316

\*  $p \leq .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* $p < .000$

Race. Most sociologists would acknowledge that race is a major basis of concern in stratification and health literature (Neighbors 1987; Kessler and Neighbors 1986; Brown 2003; Williams and Collins 1995). Applying the exposure argument to race, theorists argue black are disproportionately exposed stressful life events. One explanation is that racial discrimination producing stressful conditions for nonwhites. Massey and Denton (1993) argue that residential segregation creates environments in which blacks are

disproportionately exposed to stressful life events. To assess those differences, I examine whether blacks have increased exposure to stressful life events. Table 7.2 presents mean differences between blacks' and whites' exposure to stressful life events. I find that differences between blacks and whites in their exposure to stress: Blacks (M= 1.11; SD= 1.07) describe more exposure to stressful life events than whites (M=.747; SD= .922) do. The magnitude of the mean difference was small (eta-squared =.03).

	<b>Blacks</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Whites</b>	<b>N</b>
<b>Stressful Life Events***</b>	1.111	261	.7471	261

\* p ≤ .05; \*\* p < .01; \*\*\*p<.000

Race and Class. Although some research acknowledges that race differences in exposure to stress exist, other research suggests that, once class is controlled, race differences reduce substantially (see Kessler and Neighbors 1986). To determine whether race differences will disappear when class is controlled, I ask how exposures to stressful life events differ by race and class. Starting with working/lower-class individuals (Table 7.3), I find that working/lower-class blacks (M=1.14; SD=1.05) experience more exposure to stressful life events than working/lower-class whites (M=1.08; SD=.893) do. The mean difference between the groups is small (eta-squared = .02).

	<b>Lower- Class Blacks</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Working/lower-class Whites</b>	<b>N</b>
<b>Stressful Life Events***</b>	1.142	182	.806	98

\* p ≤ .05; \*\* p < .01; \*\*\*p<.000

I also find significant differences in exposure to stress between middle-class blacks and whites (see Table 7.4): Blacks describe greater exposure to stressful life events than their middle-class counterparts. However, the mean difference between the groups is small ( $\eta^2 = .02$ ). This finding suggests that, holding class constant, significant differences remain exist between blacks' and whites' exposure to stressful life events.

<b>Table 7.4 Independent Samples T-test for Exposure to Stressful Life Events, for Middle-Class Blacks and Whites</b>				
	<b>Middle- Class Blacks</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Middle-Class Whites</b>	<b>N</b>
<b>Stressful Life Events***</b>	1.087	69	.728	151

\*  $p \leq .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* $p < .000$

## Part II

### Exploring Stress.

Class. To understand better differences in exposure to stress by race and class, I ask how the effects of network capital, social support, and individual-level factors on exposure to stress differ by race and class (tables 7.5 and 7.6). Starting with working/lower-class individuals (7.5), I find two elements of network capital that affect exposure to stress network size and expressive action. Individuals who are embedded in larger networks report greater stressful life events. This finding mirrors similar effects of network size on women. Theorists suggest that “life events that do not occur to the focal respondent but to someone in his or her social network who is considered important” (Kessler and McLeod 1984: 640) are necessary to consider because network event events can affect levels of exposure to stress. Thus, stressful network events might be more prevalent in larger network structures. In addition, I find that working/lower-class individuals who report having less access to latent supportive



resources<sup>23</sup> (i.e., people that they regularly get everyday help from such as childcare, borrowing money or food, and transportation) also report higher exposure to stressful life events. Because latent supportive resources promote access to social support, this finding is not surprising. I also find that working/lower-class individuals who report increased perceptions of instrumental support adequacy have lower levels of stress. This finding is particularly interesting because in chapter 6, I found that working/lower-class individuals tend to perceive inadequate levels of instrumental support, compared to their affluent counterparts. However, this finding suggests that poor individuals' perception of adequate social instrumental support is effective in reducing exposure to stress. Three individual-level factors-- age, health, and gender --affect exposure to stress: I find that older individuals and individuals who report poorer health experience more stressful life events than younger and healthier individuals do. Finally, I find that women tend to experience more stressful life events than men do. The age, gender and health effect lends support for the exposure theory which suggests that women, older individuals, and unhealthy individuals disproportionately experience higher levels of stress (Thoits 1982; Vaux 1988; Dohrenwend and Dohrenwend 1976).

Moving to middle-class differences, I find a similar pattern of effects of network size on stress: Middle-class individuals with larger network structures report more exposure to stress. Consistent with the stress-health literature, I find that unmarried individuals report more exposure to stress (Thoits 1982). Finally, I find that middle-class blacks report more exposure to stressful life events than middle-class whites do. Thus, this finding suggests that racial differences in exposure to stress do not disappear after controlling for class.

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<sup>23</sup> To be clear, latent supportive resources are network resources.

<b>7.5 Ordinary Least Squares for Network Capital and Individuals' Perceptions of Social Support on Stress for Working/lower-class</b>		
<b>Working/lower-class</b>		
	<b>Coefficients (B)</b>	<b>Std. Error (SE)</b>
<b>Intercept</b>	2.867	.745
<b>The Structure Element of Network Capital</b>		
<b>Density</b>	.463	.404
<b>Network Size</b>	.240***	.065
<b>Diversity</b>		
<b>Race Diversity</b>	.349	.372
<b>Gender Diversity</b>	-.064	.197
<b>Age Diversity</b>	-.021	.012
<b>The Resource Element of Network Capital</b>		
<b>Home owner (yes)</b>	.284	.221
<b>Car owner (yes)</b>	.239	.293
<b>Home phone (yes)</b>	-.209	.445
<b>Latent Supportive Resource</b>	-.294**	.090
<b>Mainstream Individuals</b>		
<b>Education</b>	-.021	.012
<b>Social Support</b>		
<b>Perceived Expressive Support</b>	.042*	.114
<b>Perceived Instrumental Support</b>	-.193**	.098
<b>Individuals Characteristics</b>		
<b>Age</b>	-.015*	.006
<b>Health</b>	-.272***	.094
<b>Married (yes)</b>	-.174	.160
<b>Sex (male)</b>	-.455**	.164
<b>Household Size</b>	-.035	.033
<b>Race (whites)</b>	-.215	.169
<b>N= 178; R<sub>2</sub> = .216</b>		
<b>* p ≤ .05; ** p &lt; .01; ***p&lt;.000 ;+ p ≤ .05; ++ p &lt; .01; +++p&lt;.000</b>		

<b>7.6 Ordinary Least Squares Regression for Network Capital and Individuals' Perceptions of Social Support on Stress <i>for</i> Middle-Class</b>		
<b>Middle-Class</b>	<b>Stress</b>	
	<b>Coefficients (B)</b>	<b>Std. Error (SE)</b>
<b>Intercept</b>	2.025	2.777
<b>The Structure Element of Network Capital</b>		
<b>Density</b>	-.359	.395
<b>Network Size</b>	.115*	.044
<b>Diversity</b>		
<b>Race Diversity</b>	-.257	.333
<b>Gender Diversity</b>	.119	.189
<b>Age Diversity</b>	-.021	.012
<b>The Resource Element of Network Capital</b>		
<b>Home owner (yes)</b>	-.349	.252
<b>Car owner (yes)</b>	.470	.737
<b>Home phone (yes)</b>	-.332	2.759
<b>Expressive Action</b>	.012	.076
<b>Mainstream Individuals</b>		
<b>Education</b>	.022	.039
<b>Social Support</b>		
<b>Perceived Expressive Support</b>	-.213	.174
<b>Perceived Instrumental Support</b>	.035	.110
<b>Individuals Characteristics</b>		
<b>Age</b>	-.002	.006
<b>Health</b>	-.017	.116
<b>Married (yes)</b>	-.464**	.177
<b>Sex (male)</b>	-.068	.161
<b>Household Size</b>	.058	.055
<b>Race (whites)</b>	-.403*	.184
N= 173; R <sub>2</sub> = . 206		
* p ≤ .05; ** p < .01; ***p<.000; ;+ p ≤ .05; ++ p < .01; +++p<.000		

<b>7.7 Ordinary Least Squares for Network Capital and Individuals' Perceptions of Social Support on Stress for Blacks</b>		
<b>Independent Variable</b>		
	<b>Coefficients (B)</b>	<b>Std. Error (SE)</b>
<b>Intercept</b>	1.376	.967
<b>The Structure Element of Network Capital</b>		
<b>Density</b>	-.270	.481
<b>Network Size</b>	.189**	.072
<b>Diversity</b>		
<b>Race Diversity</b>	.030	.466
<b>Gender Diversity</b>	.049	.213
<b>Age Diversity</b>	-.023	.014
<b>The Resource Element of Network Capital</b>		
<b>Home owner (yes)</b>	.023	.271
<b>Car owner (yes)</b>	.099	.365
<b>Home phone (yes)</b>	-.018	.532
<b>Latent Supportive Resources</b>	-.300**	.105
<b>Mainstream Individuals</b>		
<b>Education</b>	.015	.037
<b>Social Support</b>		
<b>Perceived Expressive Support</b>	.272+	.145
<b>Perceived Instrumental Support</b>	-.036	.114
<b>Individuals Characteristics</b>		
<b>Age</b>	-.010	.008
<b>Health</b>	-.208	.112
<b>Married (yes)</b>	-.318	.188
<b>Sex (male)</b>	-.244	.198
<b>Household Size</b>	.002	.040
<b>Class (middle)</b>	.061	.215
<b>N= 156; R<sup>2</sup> = .168</b>		
<b>* p ≤ .05; ** p &lt; .01; ***p&lt;.000; + p ≤ .05; ++ p &lt; .01; +++p&lt;.000</b>		

**7.8 Ordinary Least Squares on Network Capital and Individuals' Perceptions of Social Support on Stress for Whites**

<b>Independent Variable</b>		
	<b>Coefficients (B)</b>	<b>Std. Error (SE)</b>
<b>Intercept</b>	4.594	.992
<b>The Structure Element of Network Capital</b>		
<b>Density</b>	.008	.331
<b>Network Size</b>	.171***	.040
<b>Diversity</b>		
<b>Race Diversity</b>	.031	.293
<b>Gender Diversity</b>	.044	.174
<b>Age Diversity</b>	-.021*	.011
<b>The Resource Element of Network Capital</b>		
<b>Home owner (yes)</b>	-.280	.214
<b>Car owner (yes)</b>	.769	.441
<b>Home phone (yes)</b>	-1.869	.988
<b>Latent supportive resources</b>	.006	.065
<b>Mainstream Individuals</b>		
<b>Education</b>	.001	.034
<b>Social Support</b>		
<b>Perceived Expressive Support</b>	-.344**	.127
<b>Perceived Instrumental Support</b>	-.126	.095
<b>Individuals Characteristics</b>		
<b>Age</b>	-.007	.005
<b>Health</b>	-.160	.097
<b>Married (yes)</b>	-.203	.147
<b>Sex (male)</b>	-.233	.138
<b>Household Size</b>	-.043	.040
<b>Class (middle)</b>	-.102	.147
N=195; R <sup>2</sup> = .215		
* p ≤ .05; ** p < .01; ***p<.000		

Race. I now move to differences in the stress-support process between blacks and whites (see table 7.7). Starting with blacks, I find that two elements of network capital significantly affect levels of stress. Blacks who report less expressive action also describe higher levels of stress than blacks who describe higher levels of expressive action. Blacks with larger network structures tend to report higher levels of stress. The network size effect is consistent across race and class groups. That is, having larger network structures increases exposure to stressful life events. Because the measure used to construct stressful life events taps personal stressors (i.e., financial struggles) and network events (i.e., death of family member, problems with family) larger network structures might increase exposure to stressful life events through individuals in the ego's social network.

For whites, I find a comparable effect of network size on stress. Whites who are embedded in larger network structures tend to report higher levels of stress (table 7.8). Again, this network structure finding might owe to larger networks increasing exposure to stressful network events. I also find that whites who have less age diversity in their networks report higher levels of stress. Finally, I find that whites that perceive having less access to expressive social support tend to report higher levels of stress.

### Part III

#### Distress.

Class. To understand better differences in psychological distress by race and class, I ask how race and class affect psychological distress levels. Consistent with my research predictions, I find class differences in levels of psychological distress. The results lend support for proposition H<sub>8</sub> which states that *poorer individuals tend to experience increased psychological distress than their affluent counterparts* (table 7.9). To assess the magnitude of

mean differences, I calculated eta-squared measures. For psychological distress differences between working/lower-class individuals (M= 1.338; SD=1.501) and middle-class individuals (M=.708; SD=.956), the mean difference was large (eta-squared = .06).

	<b>Lower/Working Class</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Middle-class</b>	<b>N</b>
<b>Psychological distress***</b>	1.338	314	.708	255
* p ≤ .05; ** p < .01; ***p<.000;				

Race. Turning to race differences in levels of psychological distress, Table 7.10 presents mean differences between blacks' and whites' psychological distress (independent of class). The results are inconsistent with proposition H<sub>9</sub> which states that *holding class constant, race effects will lessen on the structure and resource element of network capital, social support, stress and distress*. In fact, I find blacks (M = 1.382; SD =1.526) tend to report higher levels of psychological distress than whites (M= .848; SD = 1.11) do. To assess the magnitude of the mean differences, I calculated eta-squared. I find that the difference between black's and whites' levels of psychological distress is small (eta-squared = .03).

	<b>Blacks</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Whites</b>	<b>N</b>
<b>Psychological distress***</b>	1.382	259	.848	259
* p ≤ .05; ** p < .01; ***p<.000;				

Race and Class. To examine whether race differences will attenuate after controlling for class, I ask, net of class, how race will affect levels of psychological distress. I find that race differences remain after controlling for class, specifically among working/lower-class blacks

and whites (see tables 7.11 and 7.12). Working/lower-class blacks (M= 1.572; SD = 1.594) tend to report higher levels of psychological distress than working/lower-class whites (M=1.083; SD=1.384). However, the mean difference is small (eta-squared = .01). I found no significant differences between middle-class blacks' (M=.842; SD = 1.187) and middle-class whites' (M=.696; SD=.860) levels of psychological distress.

<b>Table 7.11 Independent Samples T-tests for Levels of Psychological Distress, by Race and Class</b>				
	<b>Working/Lower Blacks</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Working/Blacks Whites</b>	<b>N</b>
<b>Psychological distress**</b>	1.572	181	1.384	98

<b>Table 7.12.Independent Samples T-tests for Levels of Psychological Distress, by Race and Class</b>				
	<b>Middle Blacks</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Working/Blacks Whites</b>	<b>N</b>
<b>Psychological distress</b>	.842	69	.696	150

Stress, Support, Distress and Social Groups

Class. To understand how the stress-support-distress process differs by social class, I ask how network capital, social support, and individual factors differentially affect class groups. Starting with working/lower-class individuals, individuals who report exposure to stress tend to describe more psychological symptoms (i.e., distress) (Table 7.13). Consistent with the social support literature (see Thoits 1982; Vaux 1988), I find that there is a negative relationship between perceived access to expressive social support and distress:

Working/lower-class individuals who perceive that their expressive social support is inadequate tend to report higher levels of distress. I also find that working/lower-class



individuals who report poor health describe higher levels of distress, compared to working/lower-class individuals who report better health.

<b>7.13 Ordinary Least Square for Network Capital and Individuals' Perceptions of Social Support on Distress for Working/lower-class Individuals</b>		
<b>Working/lower-class Individuals</b>	<b>Distress</b>	
	<b>Coefficients (B)</b>	<b>Std. Error (SE)</b>
<b>Intercept</b>	7.134	1.078
<b>The Structure Element of Network Capital</b>		
Density	.484	.562
Network Size	-.085	.094
<b>Diversity</b>		
Race Diversity		
Gender Diversity	.261	.273
Age Diversity	.000	.017
<b>The Resource Element of Network Capital</b>		
Home owner (yes)	-.186	.307
Car owner (yes)	-.124	.406
Home phone (yes)	-.972	.617
Latent supportive resources	.053	.129
<b>Mainstream Individuals</b>		
Education	-.037	.043
<b>Stressful Life Events</b>	.236*	.110
<b>Social Support</b>		
Perceived Expressive Support	-.418**	.158
Perceived Instrumental Support	-.189	.135
<b>Individuals Characteristics</b>		
Age	-.012	.009
Health	-.669***	.134
Married (yes)	-.184	.222
Sex (male)	.152	.232
Household Size	.011	.046
Race (white)	-.036	.236
<b>N= 178; R<sup>2</sup>= .352</b>		
<b>* p ≤ .05; ** p &lt; .01; ***p&lt;.000</b>		

Moving to middle-class individuals, I find similarities in the stress-support distress process between middle- and working/lower-class individuals (table.7.14). Like working/lower-class individuals, middle-class individuals who report higher levels of

exposure to stressful life events tend to experience higher levels of distress. I also find that middle-class individuals who report poorer health tend to describe higher levels of distress. Thus, the effects of stress and health are consistent across class groups. However, I find two factors that only significantly affect middle-class individuals: latent supportive resources and access to network members who are car owners. Middle-class individuals who report access to latent supportive resources tend to report higher levels of distress. I also find that middle-class individuals who report having less access to network members with cars also report higher levels of distress.

Race. I now ask how the stress-support- distress process differs by race. Starting with blacks, I assess how network capital, stress, support, and individual factors affect levels of distress (table 7.15). Consistent with the stress-health literature, I find that blacks who report higher levels of exposure to stressful life events also tend to report higher levels of distress (Thoits 1982; Vaux 1988; Haines and Hurlbert 1992). Blacks who perceive themselves as having poorer health report higher levels of distress. Interestingly, the majority of the stress-health, literature suggests that individuals who have lower perceptions of expressive social support adequacy tend to have greater levels of distress. However, I find that, for blacks' lower perceptions of instrumental social support tend to report greater levels of distress.

Moving to the question of how the stress-support-distress process affects whites (see table 7.16), I find that whites who report increased levels of stress also have greater levels of distress. I also find that whites that perceived inadequate access to expressive social support report greater levels of distress. In addition, whites who perceive themselves as unhealthy also describe increased levels of distress. My findings show that across race and class,

individuals who are exposed to stressful life events and perceived themselves as healthy report greater levels of distress.

In sum, several conclusions can be drawn from this chapter. First, across race and class, individuals who are exposed to greater amounts of stress report higher levels of distress. Furthermore, some groups are more likely to report higher levels of stress (blacks and working/lower-class individuals). This class finding is consistent with my research prediction. Second, I find that, in general, the stress-support-distress process varies by race and class. For blacks, individuals who report greater access to instrumental social support report lower-levels of distress. Interestingly, the majority of the social support literature argues that perceptions of adequate expressive social support are more effective in alleviating stressful life events. However, for blacks, perceptions of adequacy of instrumental support are more useful in mitigating stress. However, for whites, individuals who report greater expressive social support adequacy describe lower levels of distress. Thus, blacks and whites differ in their perception of types of support adequacy.

**Table 7.14 Ordinary Least Square Regression for Network Capital and Individuals' Perceptions of Social Support on Distress for Middle-Class Individuals**

Middle-Class Individuals	Distress	
	Coefficients (B)	Std. Error (SE)
Intercept	-.469	2.689
<b>The Structure Element of Network Capital</b>		
Density	-.125	.383
Network Size	-.068	.043
<b>Diversity</b>		
Race Diversity	-.140	.322
Gender Diversity	-.218	.183
Age Diversity	.012	.012
<b>The Resource Element of Network Capital</b>		
Home owner (yes)	-.081	.245
Car owner (yes)	-1.566*	.714
Home phone (yes)	3.678	2.666
Latent supportive resources	.156*	.073
<b>Mainstream Individuals</b>		
Education	.037	.038
Stressful Life Events	.181*	.078
<b>Social Support</b>		
Perceived Expressive Support	-.312*	.169
Perceived Instrumental Support	.113	.106
<b>Individuals Characteristics</b>		
Age	-.005	.006
Health	-.330**	.134
Married (yes)	.090	.222
Sex (male)	.151	.232
Household Size	.011	.046
Race (white)	-.285	-.181
N= 173; R <sup>2</sup> =.292		
* p ≤ .05; ** p < .01; ***p<.000		

<b>Table 7.15 Ordinary Least Square Regression for Network Capital and Individuals' Perceptions of Social Support on Distress <i>for Blacks</i> Individuals</b>		
<b>Blacks</b>	<b>Distress</b>	
	<b>Coefficients (B)</b>	<b>Std. Error (SE)</b>
<b>Intercept</b>	6.919	1.231
<b>The Structure Element of Network Capital</b>		
<b>Density</b>	-.356	.609
<b>Network Size</b>	-.144	.093
<b>Diversity</b>		
<b>Race Diversity</b>	.785	.589
<b>Gender Diversity</b>	-.017	.269
<b>Age Diversity</b>	.019	.018
<b>The Resource Element of Network Capital</b>		
<b>Home owner (yes)</b>	-.010	.342
<b>Car owner (yes)</b>	-.107	.461
<b>Home phone (yes)</b>	-1.013	.672
<b>Latent supportive resources</b>	.198	.136
<b>Mainstream Individuals</b>		
<b>Education</b>	.009	.046
<b>Stressful Life Events</b>	.219*	.108
<b>Social Support</b>		
<b>Perceived Expressive Support</b>	-.280	.186
<b>Perceived Instrumental Support</b>	-.279*	.144
<b>Individuals Characteristics</b>		
<b>Age</b>	-.015	.010
<b>Health</b>	-.647***	.143
<b>Married (yes)</b>	-.128	.240
<b>Sex (male)</b>	-.138	.252
<b>Household Size</b>	.089	.051
<b>Class (middle)</b>	-.400	.272
<b>N= 156; R<sup>2</sup>= .346</b>		
<b>* p ≤ .05; ** p &lt; .01; ***p&lt;.000</b>		

<b>7.16 Ordinary Least Squares for Network Capital and Individuals' Perceptions of Social Support on Distress <i>for Whites</i> Individuals</b>		
<b>Whites</b>	<b>Distress</b>	
	<b>Coefficients (B)</b>	<b>Std. Error (SE)</b>
<b>Intercept</b>	5.904	1.236
<b>The Structure Element of Network Capital</b>		
<b>Density</b>	.448	.389
<b>Network Size</b>	-.034	.050
<b>Diversity</b>		
<b>Race Diversity</b>	-.231	.344
<b>Gender Diversity</b>	.123	.204
<b>Age Diversity</b>	-.003	.013
<b>The Resource Element of Network Capital</b>		
<b>Home owner (yes)</b>	-.345	.253
<b>Car owner (yes)</b>	-.497	.523
<b>Home phone (yes)</b>	-2.103	1.173
<b>Latent supportive resources</b>	.057	.076
<b>Mainstream Individuals</b>		
<b>Education</b>	.010	.040
<b>Stressful Life Events</b>	.264**	.089
<b>Social Support</b>		
<b>Perceived Expressive Support</b>	-.510***	.152
<b>Perceived Instrumental Support</b>	.111	.112
<b>Individuals Characteristics</b>		
<b>Age</b>	-.006	.006
<b>Health</b>	-.348**	.115
<b>Married (yes)</b>	.028	.174
<b>Sex (male)</b>	.017	.164
<b>Household Size</b>	.034	.047
<b>Class (middle)</b>	-.129	.173
<b>N=195 ; R<sup>2</sup>= .280</b>		
<b>* p ≤ .05; ** p &lt; .01; ***p&lt;.000</b>		

## CHAPTER 8: DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUDING REMARKS

### Introduction

Physical and mental health inequalities are not new concepts to the stratification and health literature. Health theorists acknowledge the pernicious affects that social and environmental stressors exert on physical and mental health (Pearlin 1989, Lin, Dean and Ensel 1989, Thoits 1984). Furthermore, research has shown that stress is not randomly distributed throughout society, but tends to be concentrated in certain groups (i.e., women, working/lower-class, and nonwhites) (Thoits 1984; Pearlin 1989; Lin, Dean and Ensel 1986). From this line of research, Pearlin (1989) urges health and stratification theorists to examine how individuals' location in the social structure are not irrelevant to the stress and health process, but instead the social structure manipulates and shapes our stressful life experiences and, in turn, affects health outcomes.

Contemporary research draws attention to the roles that social factors (e.g., social support) play in the unequal distributions of stress and, thus, mental health. Social support, a coping mechanism drawn from our social relationships, serves to buffer the pernicious effects of stress on health. In shaping and developing the social support concept, network theorists sought to explore the unequal distributions of social support by examining the components of the social structure that can constrain or enable access to social support. In response to that shift, social support theorists emphasize the social support strand of network analysis (Lin 1999; Hurlbert et al. 2000; Haines, Beggs and Hurlbert 2002; Haines and Hurlbert 1992). Incorporating network capital in the stress-support-distress model allows theorists to understand better what network sectors enhance or restrict access to such resources as social support and, in turn, affect such outcomes as physical and mental health.

Wilson's (1987) work highlights the relationship between class locations and network capital and, in turn, its affects on social and economic outcomes. The central theme of Wilson's argument is that powerful economic and demographic forces transformed the social environment of the inner-city. Furthermore, the consequences of these structural and demographic shifts create socially isolating network structures that restrict access to "resources and conventional role models" (i.e., the resource element of network capital). In positing this structural argument, Wilson sought to address the restricted range of poor blacks' network structures and counters the notion that strong ties serve as a hedge against poverty. For Wilson, then, high levels of poverty are what create social and economic isolation and, in turn, restricts poor blacks of certain instrumental resources (i.e., mainstream individuals and mainstream resources). Furthermore, if this logic is correct, then forms of network capital should vary based on class differences, regardless of race. This dissertation expands Wilson's thesis by (1) investigating whether and how the structure element of network capital varies by race and class, (2) explore how network structure affect access to network resources (i.e., instrumental resources and latent supportive resources), and (3) how network capital affects the stress-distress process..

### Key Findings

#### Network Capital

As previously mentioned, Wilson's (1987, 1992) thesis suggests that variations in network capital are largely a part of individuals' class positions within the social structure. My findings support that argument. Net of race, *social class has a direct effect on individuals' network structure* (H<sub>5</sub>). I found that lower-class blacks and whites described their network



structures as being more restricted in range (i.e., smaller network structures and less race diversity), compared to their affluent middle-class counterparts.

More importantly, my findings also revealed that beyond the effects of class, *race matters*. Interestingly, the majority of these network capital differences exist among lower-class blacks and whites. That is, lower-class blacks described network structures that were more restricted in range (i.e., smaller network structures and less gender diversity) than their working-class white counterparts. These racial differences in the structure element of network capital might suggest something more complicated than Wilson's class argument. Massey and Denton (1993) offer a compelling and supplemental explanation to Wilson's theoretical argument "by introducing residential segregation as a key conditioning variable in the social transformation of the ghetto". Thus, for Massey and Denton, the form of network capital that the poor possess is a result of racial segregation -- a structural condition<sup>24</sup>.

Thus, Massey's and Denton's work call our attention to the effects of spatial mobility (i.e., racial segregation) on aspatial social environments (i.e., the structure element of network capital). That is, residential segregation might impact the network structures that individuals are embedded and, in turn, affect the differential distributions of network resources. If Massey's and Denton's argument holds true, then future empirical findings should show network structure differences across race. More importantly these network structure differences might be exacerbated among poor blacks and whites.

Although Massey and Denton (1993) and Wilson (1992) present different frameworks for network structure variations (i.e., residential segregation or individuals' location in the social structure), they both agree that network structures affect access to network resources.

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<sup>24</sup> Although Massey and Denton agree that "a class-selective migration did occur," they argue that the "real issue . . . is the limitation of black residential options through segregation" (1993: 667).

Theorists argue that network structures that are more restricted in range also restrict access to instrumental resources ((i.e., mainstream individuals (e.g., individuals with higher levels of education) and mainstream resources (e.g., access to network members who own their cars, homes and/or have working telephones)) (Wilson 1987, 1992; Granovetter 1973; Hurlbert et al. 2008). My findings support that argument. Working/lower-class blacks and whites reported less access to instrumental resources (i.e., access to network members who were homeowners and who owned their vehicle) compared to their affluent counterparts.

Interestingly, there were no race differences found between blacks and whites access to instrumental resources. However, I did find that for blacks and whites different types of network structures promoted access to instrumental resources. For example, for whites restricted network structures (i.e., network structures that are less dense and less age diversity) promoted access to instrumental resources (i.e., access to network members who homeowners and car owners). One possible explanation is that for whites buying a home puts one in a segregated neighborhood and, thus, their network structure might become more restricted. However, for blacks, being embedded in wider-ranging network structures -- or less network density (i.e., access to weaker ties), promotes access to instrumental resources (i.e., access to network members who own cars). These race effects on network capital suggest two important implications: first, independent of class, blacks and whites possess different forms of network capital, particularly among working/lower-class blacks and whites. Second, there are race and class differences in how network structures affect network resources.

## Social Support

To understand better what forms of network capital influence perceptions of social support adequacy and, thus, health, I examined whether and how network capital affects perceptions of support adequacy by race and class (see Chapter 6). I found class effects only on perceptions of instrumental (i.e., enough people to help you) social support adequacy. Independent of race, middle-class individuals reported higher levels of instrumental support adequacy. The ethnographic literature suggests that the poor rely heavily on support to facilitate their day-to-day survival (Stack 1974; McAdoo 1982). “Alliances between individuals are formed around the clock as kin and friends exchange and give and obligate one another. They trade food stamps, rent money, and TV, hats, dice, a car, a nickel here, a cigarette there, food, milk, grits, and children” (Stack 1974). This type of ‘give and take’ relationship might negatively affect one’s perception of support adequacy. That is, although one might constantly receive tangible assistance, they are also obligated to assist and, in turn, their network structures might be perceived as more demanding than generous.

I also find race effects on instrumental support adequacy; I find that regardless of class, whites tend to have greater perceptions of instrumental support adequacy. To help explain the effects of race on perceptions of instrumental support, I revisit Massey and Denton’s (1993) racial segregation argument. Massey and Denton (1993) maintain that residential segregation restricts access to resources – even for the black middle-class. That is,

Because of segregation, middle-class blacks are less able to escape than other groups and as a result are exposed to more poverty. At the same time, because of segregation no one will move into a poor black neighborhood except other poor blacks. Thus, both middle-class blacks and poor blacks lose compared with the poor and middle class of other groups: poor blacks live under unrivaled concentrations of poverty and affluent blacks live in neighborhoods that are far less advantageous than those experienced by the middle class of other groups (1993: 665).

Thus, residential segregation might expose both working/lower- and middle-class blacks to harsher social and economic conditions and, in turn, negatively affects their perceptions of social support. Massey and Denton (1993) make clear, then, that residential segregation (i.e., spatial location) affects individuals' network capital (i.e., aspatial location) particularly for blacks.

### Stress and Distress

Finally, social support theorists maintain that social support lessens the harsh health effects (i.e., psychological distress) of stressful life events. However, holding social support constant, some groups reported increased levels of distress. Thus, one explanation is that some groups (i.e., poor and nonwhites) are differentially exposed to stress (i.e., death in the family, financial problems and problems at work). To examine that relationship, I assessed whether race and class affect exposure to stress. I found both class and race differences in stress exposures. Starting with class, I found that working/lower-class individuals report greater exposure to stress than their middle-class counterparts. This finding supported my research hypothesis (H<sub>7</sub>) which states that *poorer individuals have increased exposure to stressful life events than their affluent counterparts*. These findings suggest two possible implications: first, because working/lower-class individuals have fewer social and economic resources (i.e., financial and personal resources) to prevent exposure to life's stressors (i.e., effects of joblessness and sickness) (Neugebauer, Dohrenwend and Dohrenwend 1976), they might experience higher levels of stress. Second, this stress effect might not reflect the focal person stressful experiences (i.e., personal financial troubles) but it might be a result of network events (i.e., financial troubles experienced by someone in their network). That is,

because the demanding nature of the poor's network structures, poor individuals' might be exposed to greater amounts of stress through network events.

Chapter 7 also revealed that the support-distress process differed by race. Currently, the majority of the social support literature suggests that social support (i.e., instrumental and expressive social support) can work to effectively buffer the effects of stressful life events. However, little is known about how the stress-distress process varies by race. This research project examined those stress-distress differences across race. Interestingly, I find that there are race differences in the support-distress process. For whites, perceptions of expressive social support adequacy lowered levels of psychological distress; however, for blacks, greater perceptions of instrumental support adequacy lowered levels of psychological distress.

### Limitations

While this study makes important contributions to the study of the stress-support-distress process across social strata, several limitations can be identified. First, there are several limitations related to the measurement of variables. Starting with access to mainstream resources, I use working phones (i.e., landlines) to measure access to mainstream resources (i.e., resource element of network capital). As society shifts toward increased cell phone usage, rather than landlines, eliminating or replacing the landline measure might create a more accurate measure of mainstream resources.

Also, by and large, health theorists acknowledge that stressful life events affect mental health (Thoits 1982; Kessler 1979; Dohrenwend and Dohrenwend 1976). Furthermore, theorists argue that some groups are exposed to greater amounts of stress. To measure stress exposure, a stress scale was created. A factor analysis revealed that two items (i.e., had a close relative die and had a serious illness) were orthogonal to other items. Thus, those two items

were not considered in my analyses. However, creating a second measure of stress – using the two items – might have worked to better capture variations of stressful life events across social groups.

Social support theorists have documented that families have important consequences on social integration, social networks, and support. Isolation from family relationships – through separation/divorce/widowhood-- might decrease one's access to a broader array of organizational and interpersonal ties. Furthermore, the support systems of those who have never married might differ from those who are separated, widowed, divorced. Although the data set used did not allow for the assessment of those differences (i.e., never married versus those who are separated/divorced/ widowed), scholars have shown the importance of examining these groups differently in the stress-distress-support process.

In addition, this study did not fully capture the demanding nature of network structures. My findings suggest that individuals who are embedded in larger network structures also describe more support and distress symptoms. Thus, network structures might directly impact stress. In fact, Kessler and McLeod (1984) alluded to that by suggesting that “life events do not occur to the focal respondent but to someone in his or her social network who is considered important.” Particularly for poor individuals, having a larger network system might serve as a stressor. However, respondents were not asked about the demanding nature of their social network.

### Future Research

This study represented the first step to a more comprehensive understanding of the stress-support-distress process across social strata. Future research should conduct more detailed analyses of the race and class differences in the stress-support-distress process. As

discussed above, understanding the role of spatial locations (i.e., segregation) on aspatial environments across social strata might offer a better explain on network capital variations and its effects on social resources and, in turn, help explain the differential economic and noneconomic outcomes (i.e., health and job opportunities) across social strata.

In addition, there's a need to understand how the structure element of network capital differentially affects access to the resources element of network capital by race. Thus far, theorists have concluded that wide-ranging network structures promote access to instrumental resources (i.e., job opportunities). However, my findings suggest that for whites less age and race diversity in their network structures promoted access to instrumental resources. Thus, implementing a race sensitive analysis of network capital differences across race and class groups would provide researchers with a better understanding of variations in forms of network capital and, thus, outcomes.

Furthermore, I found that larger networks are associated with greater exposure to stress. The careful examination of that finding should be the subject of future research. Researchers have suggested that larger network structures serve as conduits for supportive resources that work to alleviate distress. However, while larger network structures promote access to supportive resources (i.e., information and social support) they might also increase one's exposure to stress. Thus larger network structures might be more demanding than generous and, in turn, increase individual's exposure to stress.

Finally, a boarder understanding of what supportive resources are instrumental in promoting health across social strata is needed. My results suggested that the support-distress model varies by race and class. By and large, the majority of the social support literature demonstrates that expressive support adequacy is more effective than instrumental

support adequacy in buffering the effects of stress. However, my findings suggest that, for blacks, instrumental support adequacy is more important than perceptions of expressive support adequacy in mitigating the pernicious effects of life's stressors on mental health. Then, my results demonstrate the importance of understanding the relationship of support and distress across social strata.

### Concluding Remarks

In sum, future research is needed to examine critically network capital, social support, stress, and distress. Hurlbert et al. 2008 demonstrated the importance of examining variations in network capital – the structure and resource element of network capital -- across social groups. Their research highlighted the importance of examining the relationship between network capital and economic (i.e., job opportunities) outcomes. I expanded that research by examining how network capital affected access to social support and, in turn, stress and health. Theorists have acknowledged that race and class are critical links in understanding the stress-support-distress process (Pearlin 1989; Neighbors 1987; Neff 1985a Brown 2003). Given that much of the health literature documents mental and physical health disparities across race and class, it is surprising that little is known about the stress-support-process by race and class. My race- and class- sensitive analysis begins to suggest that race and class differences in network capital is important for understanding the variations in the stress-support-distress process across social strata. Although the majority of health literature suggest that race differences will attenuate when class is controlled, my findings suggest that race remains a critical dimension to the stress-support-distress process. Thus, future research is needed to examine carefully network capital, social support, and distress across social strata.



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## VITA

Claire Norris was born and raised in Lake Charles, Louisiana. In May of 2003, she graduated from Louisiana State University with a Bachelor of Science degree in psychology with a minor in French. She pursued her master's and Doctor of Philosophy degree in sociology. Her primary research interests are stratification and health inequalities. More specifically, her research asks how social networks differently affect mental health outcomes across social groups, through the provision of social support.

She plans to expand her dissertation research by exploring physical health distributions across social groups. Specifically, she intends to examine physical health in the stress-support process across social groups. She is also interested in examining how such mediating factors as social support, self-esteem, and mastery differentially affect social groups in immediate and long-term recovery in disaster-affected areas (i.e., environmental disturbances, such as hurricanes, major flooding; or manmade disturbances, such as war)

Her pedagogical goal is to encourage students to understand that, although sociology shares a core methodology and approach with its counterparts in the physical sciences, sociologists differ from physical scientists because they are part of the phenomenon that they study. Thus, her main objective is to help students understand their positions in society and how their social positions (i.e., race, class, and gender) affect access to social resources (such as education, social support, and job information), and thus outcomes (i.e., job opportunities, job promotions, and health). Exploring these perspectives is instrumental in developing students' sociological imaginations both within and outside the classroom setting.